MIRACLES

WORK'S Above and Contrary to

NATURE:

OR,

An Answer to a late Translation out of *Spinoza's Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Mr. *Hobb's Leviathan*, &c. Published to undermine the Truth and Authority of Miracles, Scripture, and Religion, in a Treatise

ENTITULED

MIRACLES no Violation of the LAWS of NATURE.

Sicut non fuit impossibile Deo quas voluit instituere, sit ei non est impossibile in quicquid voluerit quas instituit mutare Naturas. *D.* August. *de* Civitate Dei, *l.* 21. *cap.* 8.

LONDON,
Printed for *Samuel Smith* at the *Princes Arms* in St. *Pauls Church-Yard.* 1683.

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1855-6:15

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MIRACLES

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OR,

An Answer to a TRANSLATION, &c.

In a TREATISE Entituled

MIRACLES no Violations of the LAWS *of* NATURE.

The Treatise about Miracles a Translation out of several Authors.

TO the *Compiler* of this *Treatise* we are ingaged for two things. 1. The *Collection* of the several parts of his Work out of several Authors, and the *sacking* of them together. 2. The *Translation* of each part out of the Latin: A Method much in use of late, to Copy out the pernicious Authors, as well as Practices, of former times, and instead of sitting down and putting their own Invention upon the Rack, to take a more easie and compendious way of doing Mischief, by Transcribing or Translating for the greater reception of the present Age, whatever has been formerly written tending to the subversion either of Religion or Civil Authority. The former of these is unquestionably

onably the Design of this Treatise; since the asserting, *That there is no such thing as a Miracle*, i. e. *a Work above Nature*, undermines the Foundations of both Law and Gospel, overthrows the Credit and Authority of Divine Revelation, and remits us either to a bare Religion of Nature and Morality, or to none at all.

The Authors Spinoza, *Mr.* Hobbs, *and Mr.* Burnett.

The Book (to Assign to each Author his share in it) consists of Two Parts. The latter, which is the main, from the middle of the third Page to the end of the Book, is wholly (except two or three Authorities in the last page) a bare Translation of the Sixth Chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, written by *Spinoza*. Which Chapter he seems to have made choice of out of that Author, as effectual by it self to compass the design of his whole Treatise: *viz.* To instill the Principles of *Deism* or *Atheism* into the minds of his Readers. The other part, which takes up the two first Pages and half of the third, is a Translation likewise of part of Mr. *Hobbs*'s Chapter about *Miracles* in his *Leviathan*, from whence he has taken as much as he thought would make for his purpose, and seem to be of a piece with the other Translation out of *Spinoza*, to which he has prefixt it.

Part 3. cap. 37.

Introductory to the Book there is a *Premonition to the Reader*. And here we might justly expect from him to speak himself, and to give us a free and ingenuous Account of his Authors, his Translation, and the Design of it. But the greatest part of this too is Borrowed (or Translated, whether you please) out of Mr. *Burnett*'s *Telluris Theoria Sacra*, and the rest only some brief Touches of what he has after more at large out of *Spinoza*. Of

Lib. 1. c. 11. p. 114.

Of his Three Authors, the *laſt* I believe, is not very proud of the company of the *other two*; and therefore is not much obliged to his Tranſlator for clapping him and them together as Confederates and Brethren in Opinion. But it is more pertinent to obſerve, that two of the three are clearly *againſt him* in their ſenſe about the *main point in Controverſie*. *Spinoza* indeed is the great Patron of his Aſſertion, *viz. That there is no ſuch thing as a Miracle, if we take the word to ſignifie a Work above or beſide Nature.* But Mr. *Burnett* and Mr. *Hobbs* are point blank of the contrary mind, and therefore either they muſt ſpeak very inconſiſtently, nay in effect contradict themſelves, or what he here produces out of them cannot be drawn to favour his and *Spinoza*'s Opinion; and ſo the co-herence of the ſeveral parts of the *Collection* will not appear to be very great, nor the Harmony very agreeable, to any that ſhall firſt conſider each as they ſtand apart in the diſtinct Authors, before he examine them as they are here aſſociated in the *Rhapſody* of this Treatiſe.

Mr. Hobbs and Mr. Burnett againſt the opinion for which they are produced.

To begin with *Mr. Hobbs*, whom we have leaſt reaſon to ſuſpect to have any wrong done him, we have no more to do but to read the reſt of that Chapter, where the *Tranſlator* leaves him, and we ſhall ſoon find that he admits and ſuppoſes Miracles in that very ſenſe, wherein he is produced to deny them here. For, Firſt, He defines a Miracle to be, *A work of God beſide his Operation by the way of Nature ordained in the Creation*; which is flatly contradictory to that Aſſertion, *That nothing can fall out but according to the order of Nature.* 2. He infers from that Definition, *That a Miracle is not the effect of a-*

ag Vertue in the Prophet whose Doctrine it confirms, but of the immediate hand of God: and that no Devil, Angel, or created Spirit can work a Miracle. Which Positions (however questionable if understood of a delegated Power in Men or Angels) are sufficient to demonstrate that it is his sense, that there are Miracles or Works above Nature. For if there are Works wrought which no *finite Spirit*, nothing but *the immediate hand of God* can effect, these certainly must surpass the force of Nature, she working by second Causes in all her Operations.

How Mr. Hobbs's Doctrine destroys the Authority of Miracles.

It is to be confessed, That Mr. *Hobbs* does *in his own way*, as well as *Spinoza*, destroy the Authority of Miracles by his Doctrine: in as much as he *does not admit them for sufficient Credentials of the Divine Mission of any Prophet, when the Doctrine he reveals does not square with the Religion established by the Civil Magistrate.* So that all the Miracles of our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* were of no force, because the Doctrine they taught contradicted the established Tenets of the superstitious *Jews*, and the Idolatrous *Gentiles.* Yet, though these two Authors (equally to be honoured for the good Service they have done the Christian Religion) agree very well in the main Design, they differ notwithstanding very widely in the way of compassing it, as far as the opposite parts of a contradiction can set them at odds: the one Asserting that there are works above Nature, the other denying it: So that the Author of this Collection was not very well advised to think they would cotten so well together; and ought rather to have tried first how far the Work might be done by one of them singly, and to have reserved the other for a new expedient if the former had failed. Mr.

Mr. *Hobbs* then, we ſee, aſſerts there are Miracles. And ſo does Mr. *Burnett* in Words moſt expreſs, and in the very ſame Paragraph, part whereof he has quoted out of him in the Latine in his laſt Page, and at very little diſtance from the very Words, there quoted to repreſent him as an abettor of the contrary opinion. *Certiſſimum eſt* (ſays he) *à Divinâ Providentiâ* (*pendere res omnes cujuſcunq; ordinis & ab eâdem*) *vera miracula edita eſſe.* Lib. 1. c. 11. p. 138.

It is, I think, a ſufficient prejudice againſt the opinion which he produces theſe Authors to inſinuate and patronize, or at leaſt his judgment in the choice of his Authors, that two out of three declare flatly againſt him in that Point. Yet 'tis poſſible that, as he produces them here, they may both better conſiſt with him and *Spinoza* than with themſelves. This therefore comes to be examined, and will lead us gradually to give a particular Anſwer to each part of the whole Work. We begin therefore with the *Premonition to the Reader*, he there with Mr. *Burnett*.

The firſt part of the Premonition *taken out of Mr.* Burnett.

What he takes from Mr. *Burnett*, is out of the eleventh and laſt chapter of the firſt book of his *Theory*. Mr. *Burnetts* Words are theſe, *In eâ ſum equidem ſententiâ, Authores Sacros cùm de rebus Naturalibus Sermones habent*, &c. Upon theſe the *Tranſlator* thus varies in the firſt Words of his *Premonition*, *It is the judgment of moſt of the Ancient Fathers of the Chriſtian Faith, and of the moſt learned Theologues of the Moderns, that the Authors of the Holy Scriptures when they ſpeak of Natural things*, &c. And ſo goes on with the reſt of that Page, which he tranſlates more faithfully: what he deſigned in this amplification, whether to amuze his Reader, oblige Mr. *Burnet*, or to make

make a fair shew of his own great reading, I shall not enquire.

The Summ of it. The Summ of what he has out of Mr. *Burnett* is this, *That the Authors of the Holy Scriptures where they speak of Natural things, design only to excite Piety and Devotion in us, not to improve us in the knowledg of Nature. That agreeably to this Design, they explain the visible Works of God in a manner suitable to the received opinions of the vulgar: they wrest the general causes and ends of the whole Creation in favour of the Peoples prejudices, as if all things were ordained only for the good and benefit of mankind: they do not make mention of the ordinary train of second causes in the productions of Nature, but recur immediately to God himself, the first Cause, Author and President of it, and compendiously refer all things to his immediate Power, and to his irresistible Will and Command.*

The design of Mr. Burnett in what he speaks there. All Mr. *Burnett's* design in this, is to excuse himself for giving a Philosophical and Mechanical account of the Deluge and other grand Effects in the Sublunary World; as the Original of the Mountains, Rocks, Islands, Ocean, Rivers, *&c.* in the Terraqueous Globe. The production of all these the Scripture immediately refers to God: and Divines ordinarily speak of them as Effects supernatural and miraculous; *viz.* That God by the same powerful Word, whereby he created Heaven and Earth, cast up the Mountains, and cut out the Channels for the Rivers, and that vast cavity for the immense Ocean, *commanded the waters into one place, and made the dry land appear.* And by the like command, *when the wickedness of man was great upon the Earth, and the end of all flesh was come before*

Gen. 1. v. 9.

Gen. 6. v. 5, 11.

before him, opened the Catarrhacts of Heaven, and broke up the Fountains of the Deep, and destroyed all mankind, except eight persons, by a deluge of Waters. To this Mr. *Burnetts* Answer is, That it is in no wise necessary that these effects should be conceived to have been wrought by miracle. For the Scripture, *that it does not appear that they are recorded for Miracles there, because the Scripture immediately refers effects purely Natural to God, and makes no mention of the train of second causes subservient to God in their production: the design of the sacred Writers, when they speak of natural things, being not to instruct us in the knowledg of Nature* by giving us a Philosophical account of their mediate causes, *but to excite in us Piety and Devotion*, by working in our minds a true sense of the Power and Providence of Almighty God, to which all things owe their original. Gen. 7. v. 11.

This is the intent, scope, and drift of Mr. *Burnett's* Words, as they stand at home in their proper place; but here they are applied to far different purposes, as appears by the Conclusion the *Translator* draws from them, when he comes to speak himself: *viz. That these things considered.* *The conclusion which the Translator draws from Mr. Burnett's principles.*

1. *We are not to admire, if we find in the Holy Scripture many memorable things related as miracles, which notwithstanding proceeded from the fixt and immutable order of Nature*, &c.

2. (Which is but the application of the former) *We ought not rashly to accuse any Man of Infidelity, only because he refuses to believe, that those Miracles were effected by the immediate Power of God*, &c. Which conclusion of his

1. Is just the quite contrary to Mr. *Burnett's.*

2. De-

2. Destroys the authority of Scripture, and leaves us free to disbelieve any Miracle recorded in it for such.

Their conclusion quite contrary to Mr. Burnett's.

1. It is quite contrary to Mr *Burnett's*. Mr. *Burnett's* way of Arguing is this, The Scripture immediately refers to God things which are purely the effects of Nature. *Ergo*, we cannot justly conclude, that what effects the Scripture immediately refers to God, those it records for miracles. Yes (says the *Translator* upon the same grounds) we may conclude that it records them for Miracles, and this too we may conclude over and above, that the Scripture records such effects for Miracles which really are the Effects of Nature.

It destroys the authority of the Scripture, and the belief of Miracles.

2. It destroys the authority of Scripture, and leaves us free to disbelieve any Miracle recorded in it for such. For first it makes the Holy Scripture guilty of Imposture, and that not in a small matter, but such whereupon depends the authority of all the revelations made therein by God to mankind: for upon the truth of those relations in Scripture, wherein these Miracles are recorded as matter of Fact, depends the certainty of the *Divine Mission*, of *Moses and the Prophets*, *our Blessed Saviour and his Apostles*, and consequently the authority of the Doctrine which they revealed. 2dly, It takes away the only [illegible] which we have, to discern whether the effect it relates be a Miracle or not. The only thing whereby we can know it is from the Scriptures manner of relating it: if it relates one thing for a Miracle which is not, all may be, for ought we know, of the same Nature. And so farewel both the belief of Miracles and the Scripture it self.

I presume that he does not *play* with us in a matter of this importance, *i. e.* That he does not mean by the Scriptures *relating such things as Miracles*; onely that it relates the production of them in such Terms, as Idiots and Illiterate Persons may from thence conceive that they are super-natural Effects (for then all he says will be very true, but withal very impertinent) but that it sets them down for Effects Miraculous and Supernatural as much as any in the whole Bible. And if he means thus, I have already hinted the ill Consequences of his Doctrine, and how disagreeable his Conclusion from Mr. *Burnett's* Principles is to that which Mr. *Burnett* himself draws from them, and shall proceed now to shew how unnaturally it is drawn from such premises.

It does not follow from Mr. Burnett's Principles.

I shall not stand to make any tedious Reflection upon each particular in the summary Account which I have given above of what he has out of Mr. *Burnett*; but I shall apply my self chiefly to the Consideration of that whereupon he seems wholly to build his Conclusion. All that I shall say to the rest is this, Touching *the design of the Sacred Writers when they speak of natural things*, I grant it to be such as is there suggested: And, That in subordination to that Design, they may be conceived to *explain the visible Works of God in a manner suitable to the received Opinions of the Vulgar*; i. e. To speak their Sense and Dialect about Natural Things, when they do occasionally speak of them, and to comply therein with their common prejudices; as *Moses* seem to do *Gen.* 1. 16. where he ranks the *Moon* with the *Sun* as the other *great light*, i. e. the next or only one besides of considerable magnitude; speaking there agreeably

How far each Particular, in what he has from Mr. Burnett, is true.

to the appearance of ſenſe, and the apprehenſion of the vulgar grounded thereupon. Yet not that they are obliged to comply with all their prejudices neither; For this is one, *That every conſiderable Effect in Nature is miraculous and ſupernatural*: And the Deſign of the Sacred Writers does not oblige them to condeſcend ſo far to the apprehenſions of the vulgar, as to relate every effect for Miraculous which they conceive to be ſo. Their Deſign is, *Not to inſtruct us in the knowledge of Nature, but to excite Piety and Devotion in us.* The utmoſt therefore that Deſign will oblige them to, in this regard, is to make no mention of the Train of ſecond Cauſes in the Productions of Nature (which effectually anſwers the firſt part of their Deſign) and to aſcribe all Effects to God as their Author (which as fully anſwers the ſecond) and nothing of all this amounts to a *Relation of the Effects of Nature for Miracles*, as will appear immediately.

To the next thing, *That they wreſt the general cauſes and ends of the whole Creation in favour of the peoples prejudices, as if all things were ordained only for the good and benefit of Mankind*: I deny that the Scripture wreſts the ends of the Creation; for this were to make the parts of the World be Created by God for other ends and purpoſes than he created them for. All the Scripture does is, that it mentions only thoſe ends of Nature (out of many for which it is ordained in the Divine Wiſdome) that relate to the good and benefit of Mankind (as for inſtance thoſe ends only of the Heavenly Bodies, *That they are for lights in the Firmament of Heaven, and for Signs, and for Seaſons, and for Days, and for Years*) yet

Gen. 1. 14, 15.

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it does not deny but that there may be many other which to consider is not pertinent to its purpose.

The Principle from whence he draws his Conclusion.

But the Principle from whence he draws his Conclusion, is in the last words of what he has put of Mr. *Burnett*: viz. *That the Authors of the Holy Scriptures make no mention of the ordinary Train of second Causes in the productions of Nature, but recur immediately to God himself, the first Cause, Author, and President of it, and compendiously refer all things to his immediate Power, and to his irresistible Will and Command.* Their recurring immediately to God himself, and referring all things to his immediate Power, is to be understood in this sense, Not that the Scripture declares these Effects to proceed from nothing but the immediate hand of God (for this is to declare them to be supernatural, and such then they are unquestionably.) But, That it ascribes them only to God, and makes no mention of any Train of second Causes subservient to him in their production. For Instance, the Scripture immediately refers the Effects of Nature to God himself, in those places of the 147th *Psalm* where it says, *He giveth snow like wooll; he scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels. — He sendeth out his word and melteth them; he bloweth with his wind and the waters flow.* So when God says to *Noah*, *I do set my bow in the cloud*, and to *Samuel*, *To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of* Benjamin. These Instances are his and *Spinoza's*, as appears p. 17th and 18th below in his Treatise. And the Scripture refers these Effects immediately to God, as it mentions him only as the Author of them, and no other mediate cause;

Psalms 47. 4, 15, 17, 18.

Gen. 9. 13.

1 Sam. 9. 16.

not that it says that he alone Acts in the production of them, for this were to relate them for Miracles.

The ground of the Connexion of the Conclusion, with the Principle from whence he draws it.

This therefore being stated, his way of Arguing will appear to be this, *The Authors of the Holy Scriptures make no mention of the ordinary Train of second Causes in the Productions of Nature, but recur immediately to God himself*, &c. Ergo, *they relate many things as Miracles, which yet notwithstanding are the Effects of Nature.* The Connexion of this antecedent and consequent is by Vertue of this Proposition, *That the Authors of the Holy Scripture must be conceived to relate those Effects as Miracles, which they immediately ascribe to God, without mention of any second Causes subservient to him in their production.* The falshood whereof I shall evidently discover. 1. *By Instance.* 2. *From the natural import of the words.* 3. *From the reason of the thing it self.* 4. *By shewing in some Instances what it is for the Holy Scripture to relate any thing as a Miracle.*

This ground proved to be false, 1. By Instance.

1. *By Instance.* Infinite would be the number of Miracles Recorded in Scripture, if this were the manner whereby we are to know what Effects are related therein as such. The Scripture teaches us (from the mouth of our *Blessed Saviour*) to pray to God immediately for our daily Bread, for our Food and Raiment, for the annual increase of our Corn, Wine, and Oyle, for the former and latter Rain in their Season. It takes no notice of the ordinary way whereby Nature it self supplies us with these Necessaries, how our Corn grows in our Fields, how the Vine sends forth her Grapes, how the *Clouds drop Fatness*: But in a word, refers all to God without any more ado. *He*, it says, *Visiteth the Earth and*

Psal. 65. 9, 11.

blesseth

bleſſeth it: He maketh it very plenteous: he crowneth the year with his goodneſs. In a word, *He openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteouſneſs.* Pſal. 145. 16 Yet, I ſuppoſe, it were very hard to infer that the Scripture ſets down all this as ſupernatural and miraculous: That it obliges us to conceive (not the Flood only, but even) the former and latter rain to come down by Miracle: That it prompts us to expect as ſupernatural a proviſion of our daily bread, as the *Iſraelites* had in the Wilderneſs, *Elijah* in *Horeb* when the Ravens were his Purveyours, the Widow with whom he lodged, whoſe *Barrel of Meal* was preſerved from waſting; or laſtly, the *four or five thouſand* fed by our Saviour in the Goſpel, which I ſuppoſe was a work of Nature, but *related* in Scripture *as a Miracle*, becauſe it mentions not how the Corn grew in the hands and mouths of them that did eat it.

2. *The Natural import of the Words diſproves this conceit.* To be related as a Miracle, is to be recorded for an effect of God's own immediate Hand and ſupernatural Power. To be immediately refer'd or aſcribed to God, without mention of a Train of mediate cauſes, is quite another thing. There it is expreſly or by conſequence declared, that the Work is above Nature; here it is left in *Medio*, without any determination from the manner wherein it is related, whether it be a natural or ſupernatural effect of the Divine Power. For inſtance, the Scripture ſays in one place, *Thou makeſt Darkneſs, and it is Night.* in another, *He ſent Darkneſs, and made it Dark.* In the former it ſpeaks of the ordinary, in the latter of the *Egyptian* darkneſs; and both it immediately refers to God, men- 2. *From the Natural import of the words.* Pſal. 104. v. 28. 105. v. 28.

mentioning no natural cauſes of the one or the other. Both of them it may thus aſcribe to God, though the one be the Effect of Nature, and the other a Miracle; and therefore to aſcribe any Effect immediately to God, is not to relate it as a Miracle.

3. From the reaſon of the thing.

3. *This will farther appear from the very reaſon of the thing it ſelf.* The Scripture may juſtly aſcribe to God all the Effects of Nature without mentioning any train of ſuborbordinate cauſes, and yet cannot thereupon be juſtly concluded to relate theſe things as Miracles. And this becauſe firſt God is the Author of Nature, by his Power, and the Governour and Preſident of it by his ſuperintending Providence: therefore every Effect in Nature may be juſtly aſcribed to him as it's Author. 2dly, The Scriptures deſigns to ſpeak of the Effects of Nature only with regard to the Power and Providence of Almighty God; therefore it may juſtly aſcribe them to him without mention of the train of natural Cauſes whereby he mediately produces them. If then any Effect may be in this manner aſcribed to God, and yet he be no farther the Cauſe of it, than as he is the Author and Governour of Nature by his Power and Providence: if ſo, then it is no juſt Concluſion, *That the ſacred Writers relate any thing as a Miracle, becauſe they immediately refer it to God without mention of the train of natural Cauſes ſubſervient to him in the Production of it.*

What it is for the Scripture to relate any thing as a Miracle.

4. But to give as full ſatisfaction as may be in this Point, (and withal to ſhew that, all this notwithſtanding, there are ſome Effects ſo related in the Holy Scripture, as that it may be juſtly conceived to have recorded them for Miracles) I ſhall ſtate, *What it is for the Scripture to relate any thing as a Miracle.* It

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s not enough (as we have ſeen already) that it aſcribes the Effect to God as its Author: nor that it immediately aſcribes it to him, without mention that it is produced by the mediation of ſecond Cauſes. For every thing proceeds from him, whether it be by the courſe of Nature, or a Work of his ſupernatural Power, and therefore is to be aſcribed to him: and the Scriptures aſcribing of it to God without mention any other Cauſe, does not neceſſarily imply, that no other Cauſe had any hand in the Production of it. But to relate a thing as a Miracle, is to relate it for an Effect of Gods own immediate Hand, or, an Effect above, beſide, or contrary to Nature. And this may be done two wayes: 1. *By expreſs Declaration*: 2. *By relating it in ſuch a manner and with ſuch circumſtances as from thence we may rationally conclude the Effect to be miraculous.* For the firſt, there may ſeem to be very few inſtances if any, wherein we can certainly aſſure our ſelves, that the Holy Scripture *declares* any Effect to be a Work above Nature. For though it may and often does uſe the Word *Miracle*, yet, that being Ambiguous, it may ſtill be uncertain whether it be to be taken for any thing more than an Effect Wonderful and Surprizing indeed, yet purely Natural. All which notwithſtanding, in ſome places we may truly vouch the *expreſs declaration* of the Holy Scripture, that ſuch and ſuch Effects are miraculous. *Joh.* 2. 11. After the relation of our bleſſed Saviour's *Turning* the *Water* into *Wine*, the Text ſays, *This beginning of Miracles did Jeſus.* So alſo *John* 4. 54. after the *Cure* of the *Nobleman's Son*, *This is again the ſecond Miracle that Jeſus did.* In theſe two places the Scripture does in a manner reflect upon the Works

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it had related, and declares them to be ſupernatural. But by the Word *Miracle* may poſſibly be meant no more than an Effect Strange and Wonderful, not a Work above Nature: unleſs we can give ſome certain proof of the contrary. And I think this one Conſideration may be ſufficient to evince it. The Deſign of the Scripture in relating theſe Works of our bleſſed Saviour, is to propound them to us as undoubted Evidences of his Divine Miſſion. Now Evidences of that they could not be unleſs they were Works above Nature, becauſe an Effect of Nature cannot prove Gods immediate power and preſence, nor conſequently confirm the truth of any Prophets Commiſſion from Heaven to reveal his Doctrine. For the Scripture therefore to relate theſe Works of our Bleſſed Saviour, as undoubted Evidences of his Divine Miſſion, will argue that the Scripture where it ſtiles theſe Works Miracles, Signs, and Wonders, muſt mean ſtrictly ſuch as exceed the power of Nature: Otherwiſe it would impoſe upon our belief, and oblige us under pain of Damnation to embrace a Doctrine as Divine, upon ſuch Evidences, as are in no wiſe ſufficient to confirm the Authority of the Perſon that reveals it. And upon this Ground we might diſcover many more inſtances of Effects, *expreſly declared* in Scripture to proceed from God's immediate extraordinary Power. For it holds as well in the Miracles of the *Apoſtles* as our *Bleſſed Saviour's*, and in *Moſes's* too, the Scripture relating them as wrought to evidence his Commiſſion from Heaven to inſtitute the Law, as well as thoſe of our Saviour and his Apoſtles to evidence their Authority to Preach and Plant the Goſpel.

Gospel. But if there were no such express Declaration in the Holy Scripture, there are yet, 2. *Many relations of Matters of Fact couched in such Terms, as that we may justly conclude from thence that the Effects there spoken of are related as Miraculous and Supernatural.* As, 1. Where the Effect is related as done without the use of Means. So in our Saviours curing Diseases (and indeed Working most of his Miracles) by the Word of his Mouth, turning the Water into Wine by the internal tacit Act of his Will, &c. 2. Where Mention is made of Means used, but those such as cannot be conceived to be in their own Nature proper or sufficient to produce the Effect. As the Clay wherewith our Saviour cured the Eyes of the Person born Blind, the Spittle wherewith he loosed the tongue of the other that was Dumb, &c. These effects may be justly affirmed to be related in Scripture as Miracles: not upon this account, that the Scripture *refers them immediately to God without mention of any train of Natural Causes subservient to him in their Production:* it appears we have some surer Grounds whereupon to proceed in examining what Effects in Scripture are *related as Miracles*, though that which he would possess his Readers with the Opinion that it is the only *criterion* we have, be (as has been shewed) not only false, but ridiculous and absurd.

From what has been said, I may rationally draw these two consequences.

1. That for the Scripture to *refer any Effect immediately to God*, is not for it *to relate the Effect as Miraculous:* and therefore from its referring the Effects of Nature immediately to God, we cannot infer (as he does) *that the Scripture relates many memorable* Corollary 1.

things

things as Miracles, which yet notwithstanding proceeded from the fixt and immutable Order of Nature.

Corollary 2. 2. That there are yet many Effects plainly related in Scripture for Miracles; by it's expreſs Declaration, and it's relating of them in ſuch Terms, from whence we may by undeniable Conſequence gather as much. And ſo (ſuppoſing that the Scripture is a true Hiſtory, for which we have infinitely more evidence than for any other Hiſtory in the World) it follows evidently (againſt his main Aſſertion) from the relations of theſe miraculous Effects in Scripture, that *there really have been Miracles* in the ſenſe wherein he denies them, *i. e. Works beſide, above, and contrary to Nature.*

But this Corollary (though very pertinent to our purpoſe) is *ex abundanti*: All that we were obliged to, was to ſhew, that the Concluſion which he draws from the Principles he takes out of Mr. *Burnett* is falſe and illogical. Since therefore Mr. *Burnett* aſſerts poſitively that there are Miracles, as is ſhewed above, and nothing here produced out of him can infer or inſinuate the contrary: we may juſtly demand both *in his Name*, and *in behalf both of Religion, Reaſon, and good Logique*, that this part of the *Premonition* be returned into the Place from whence it came, where it may ſtand with more Truth and Coherence; and the Concluſion of the *Tranſlator* left to ſtand apart by it ſelf, as a bold and (I may ſay) Impious Aſſertion without any Proof.

The reſt of the Premonition conſidered But, not to wrong him, he has ſome *Succedaneous* Arguments in the cloſe of the *Premonition*: but theſe, as I before hinted, are only ſome brief Touches of what we have after more at large out of *Spinoza*. viz.

That

That for God to work by a power immediate (or supernatural) *is inconsistent with and Point-blank repugnant the Fundamental Laws and Constitutions of Nature.* (It sounds somewhat like to the *King's Prerogative* being inconsistent with the *Fundamental Laws of Property and Priviledge.*) *That these Laws are the Acts of the Divine Wisdom, & extend themselves to whatever events he hath Willed and Decreed: that the power of Nature is infinite, as being one and the same with the Power of God.* He has one thing which he asserts besides, *that among all the Miracles related to be done in favour of the Israelites, there is not one that can be apodictically Demonstrated to be repugnant to the established Order of Nature.* Now here I am not bound to Demonstrate it for his sake, for two Reasons. 1. Because it were to prove a Negative, 2. Because his *main Ground* (or *Spinoza's* rather) why he denies all supernatural Effects, is not upon account of his own great reach in Natural Philosophy, whereby he could undertake to solve Mechanically all the effects related in Scripture for Miraculous; but from Arguments purely *Metaphysical* proving in his Opinion, the impossibility of any such thing as a Work above Nature. For to this he holds and not the other, as appears from p. 21. of the Treatise where he *concludes absolutely* (from his Arguments against the possibility of Miracles.) *That all the Events that are truly related in Scripture to have come to pass, proceeded necessarily according to the immutable Laws of Nature: And that if any thing be found which can be apodictically Demonstrated to be repugnant to those Laws, or not to have followed from them, we may safely and piously believe the same not to have been dictated by*

Divine inſpiration, but impiouſly added to the Sacred Volumes by ſacrilegious Men. So that unleſs the Scripture Miracles will ſubmit to his Touch-ſtone, unleſs they will come and lay open their Occult Qualities, and the whole plot and confederacy of thoſe natural Cauſes that combined to Effect them, he has an *Index Expurgatorius* to blot their Names out of the holy Scripture, and a *Court of Inquiſition* for thoſe that relate them, to arraign them for *Sacriledge* and *Impiety*: But I paſs on to conſider each part of the *Treatiſe* in order.

The Sum of what he has from Mr. Hobb's in the beginning of the Treatiſe.

The Treatiſe is divided between Mr. *Hobbs* and *Spinoza*. Mr. *Hobbs* ſpeaks as far as to the middle of the third page, out of the Chapter about Miracles, in the third Part of his *Leviathan*. He firſt explains the ſignification of the Word, from its Etymology, and other words in ſacred and profane Writers of like import with it. From its Etymology he deduces that it ſignifies, *A Work of God which men admire or wonder at.* Then propoſes to enquire what works are ſuch, and reduces them to two kinds. 1. *Such as are rare, and the like thereof ſeldom or never ſeen.* 2. *Such as we cannot conceive to be produced by natural Cauſes, but only by Gods immediate hand.* He gives ſome Inſtances of both: An Oxe or an Horſe ſpeaking, preter-natural Births, the Converſion of a man into Stone, and the firſt Rainbow that appeared. That ſuch Effects as theſe ſeem Miraculous, becauſe rare, or no natural cauſe of them conceivable. On the contrary, the Works of Art, however wonderful, not reputed to be Miracles, becauſe their Cauſes known.

Treat. p. 2.

Upon

Upon the ſame ground he obſerves, That the ſame thing may ſeem to be a Miracle to one Man, and not to another, in proportion to their different degrees of Knowledge and Experience. So, *Eclipſes* Miracles to the vulgar, not to Philoſophers: Simple Men made to believe that others can know their moſt ſecret Actions by Inſpiration, when the more wary and prudent perceive the juggle. So far Mr. *Hobbs* here, in his *Leviathan* he proceeds to aſſign another property of a Miracle, viz. *That it be wrought to confirm the Divine Miſſion of ſome Prophet or other*; and then to give a definition of it: but there his *Tranſlator* leaves him, and paſſes on to *Spinoza*.

Before we follow him thither, we may reflect a little. 1. Upon Mr. *Hobbs*'s Doctrine. 2. Upon the uſe whereto he applies it. Mr. *Hobbs* informs us, What Works are by Men wondered at and reputed miraculous: He ſhews by Inſtance, That they are ſuch as are rare and unuſual, or ſuch as we cannot conceive to proceed from Natural Cauſes. *Reflections upon what Mr* Hobb's *ſays.*

He does not ſay, That this is all that goes to the making of a Miracle, nor that this is the only Rule we have whereby to diſcern what Effects are ſuch: but that this is enough to make things ſeem to men to be miraculous, and that a true Miracle is indeed an Effect rare and inexplicable, and ſomewhat more. If he mean otherwiſe, he contradicts himſelf ſoon after, when he defines a Miracle to be a *Work of God* (not conceived only, but really) *beſide his Operation by the way of Nature ordained in the Creation*: and infers from thence, *That it cannot be the Effect of any thing but the immediate hand of God.* Yet, to clear all; That a man cannot conceive ſuch an Effect

ſect to proceed from Natural Cauſes, may bear a double ſenſe. 1. That he is not capable of aſſigning the Natural Cauſe of it, or farther, of apprehending how it can be effected by any. 2. That he *clearly and diſtinctly perceives* that it is impoſſible to be produced by the Courſe of Nature. I grant that this is enough to aſſure a man that it is a Miracle; but if he concludes it to be ſo in the other caſe, he is guilty of preſumption in meaſuring the extent of the force of Nature by the narrow reach of his own knowledge or capacity.

The uſe whereto the Tranſlator applies what he takes from Mr. Hobb's.

This may prepare us to conſider the uſe whereto Mr. *Hobbs*'s Doctrine is applied by his *Tranſlator*. His Deſign is, before he come to *Spinoza*'s Arguments againſt the belief of Miracles, to make a diſcovery of the Cauſes that introduced this grand Miſtake into the World. And the firſt, as a *Corollary* from Mr. *Hobb's* Doctrine, he makes to be, *Admiration*, and that proceeding from theſe two Cauſes, *Rurity* and *Ignorance*. That is, all the effects which the deluded World has miſtaken for Miracles, are ſuch as are only rare and unuſual, and inexplicrable: and the Cauſes which make mankind ſo prone to admit them for Miraculous, are our ignorance of the Cauſes, and want of experience and obſervation of the Effects of Nature.

Tr. p. 3

Where he takes Spinoza in hand.

The ſecond cauſe which he Aſſigns of the belief of Miracles, is *Superſtition*, viz. That it is our hopes and fears which make us conceive every unuſual Event in Nature to be the effect of an extraordinary Divine Power, fore-bodding to us ſome good or evil. And here he takes *Spinoza* in hand, and we come at length to the main part of his Work, to which the reſt is only Preliminary, and with what Coherence and how

how much to his purpose, hath already been shewed. Before I joyn Issue with him about the main Point in Controversy, I shall premise only this short observation, in regard to what he says of the Causes of the belief of Miracles. It may very well be granted him, that the generality of Mankind, who are the Ignorant and unthinking Sort, are very prone to admire and wonder at every considerable Effect of Nature, and to look upon it as proceeding from an extraordinary Power, and the immediate hand of God: And that the Causes of this may be their want of knowledg and experience, and their superstitious Hopes and Fears. But to insinuate thereupon the same to be the only ground of the belief of any Miracles, is very Presumptuous as well as Irrational: unless it could be evidently made out that all Miracles are impossible; and to see how effectually that may be done is our next Work, *viz.* to examine the Method wherein *Spinoza*, and from him the *Author of this Collection*, attempts to demonstrate it.

Spinoza begins with a brief Account of the chief *Heads* of this (as he calls it) popular mistake, and the first *Authors* of it. These he makes to be the People of the *Jews*, who to magnify their own Nation, as under a more peculiar care of the Divine Providence than any other, and to set forth the greatness of the God they adored above the Gods of the Heathen, recounted to them what *mighty Works* he had *done for them*, and how all the parts of Nature, which the Heathens Worshipped, were under his Command and Controul. The particulars of this Error which he recounts are these, *That the ordinary sort of Men think that God's Power and Providence does then most eminently* Tr. p. 3. 4, 5.

minently appear, when any thing happens contrary to what they conceive to be the Course of Nature. That they think Nature's swerving from her own Laws, to be the best Argument for the existence of a Deity. That they take those persons for Atheists, who attempt to deduce a Miracle from Natural Causes. That they think God sits idle when nature acts in her usual way, and Nature is suspended, whenever God pleases to interpose. That they form in their brain a Notion of two Powers numerically distinct, the one of God, the other of Nature, understanding not what they mean by either. And that all this they do partly out of superstition, partly out of a desire to oppose themselves to Men of more Wise and Philosophical heads.

I need not stand to examine the Truth of this Account: it appears to be purely *Declamatory*, and not (which might have been more justly expected) a fair opening of the state of the Question, and a Declaration what *those* of his Adversaries hold concerning it, who take up the belief of Miracles upon better grounds than vulgar Prejudice and Superstition. I shall have Occasion to do that for him in what follows.

He proceeds therefore, and proposes to do four things. Tr. p. 6.

Four Propositions laid down by Spinoza.

1. *To prove, that nothing in the World happens contrary to Nature, but that Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.*

2. *To prove, that by Miracles we cannot know the Essence nor the Existence, nor consequently the Providence of God: but that all these may be better known by the fixt and immutable Order of Nature.*

3. *To shew by instances out of the Scripture, that by the Decrees and Volitions, and consequently the Providence of God, it understands nothing else but the very Order of Nature, which necessarily follows from his eternal Laws.*

4. *To treat of the manner of interpreting the Scripture Miracles, and what is chiefly to be observed in the Relations about them*; or (as the Traslator) *to shew that most Men have erred in the manner of interpreting the Miracles recorded in the holy Scriptures.*

Of these Four, the first onely tends directly to prove his Assertion: the second Obliquely strikes at the being of Miracles, as it makes them no Evidences of the immediate Power and Presence of God, and so wholely useless and insignificant, as no Proofs of what they are designed for. The other two tend only either to draw the Scripture to his side; or to elude the force of the Arguments brought from thence against him.

1. He is to prove, *That nothing in the World happens contrary to Nature, but that Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.* Before I come to examine his Arguments, I shall 1. State what is meant by *Nature*, and the *Laws* of it, in this Controversy. 2. Lay down the main Grounds whereupon the possibility of Miracles depends. 1. Proposition.

1. *What is the meaning of the Word Nature, and the Laws of it in this Controversy.* A Miracle in the common acceptation of the Word, which *Spinoza* opposes, is taken for a Work beside, above, or contrary to Nature, beside the order, above the force, and contrary to the Laws of it. Now the Word Nature may be *What is here meant by Nature and the Laws of it.*

taken in many Significations. Eeither 1. For the Essence of any, but properly of Material and Corruptible Beings. Or 2. For the Aggregate of them, the Material World. Or 3. For the Author of Nature, God himself, called thence *Natura Naturans*. Or Lastly, For the Order of the several Bodies, as they act amongst one another, according to their innate Powers and Dispositions.

Now the acception of the Word here, is for the Aggregate of Bodies in the World, and the Order wherein they act amongst one another: And so the Laws of Nature must be, such as determine the Manner wherein Natural bodies act among themselves; whether they be the *general* Laws of Motion, which determine how each part of Matter must be moved upon the occurrence of other Bodies, or *particular* Laws impressed upon their several Natures, determining each to act in such or such a particular manner. The question therefore about the possibility of Miracles, must be this, *Whether there can be any such Effects in the Material World, as are beside, above, or contrary to the Order wherein Natural Bodies are determined to act among themselves*: i. e. such Effects as transcend their Power and Efficacy, and deviate from or are repugnant to the general or particular Laws of motion determining them to act.

The Ground of the Possibility of Miracles.

2. The Question therefore thus stated, I am to shew, *what are the main Grounds whereupon the Possibility of Miracles depends.* And I think it may be rationally deduced from these Principles. God is able to effect any thing which neither does, 1. Imply a Contradiction in the Nature of the thing it self; nor 2. Is repugnant to the Nature of God and his infinite Per-

Perfection. Omnipotence is properly a Power to bring any thing to Effect which does not imply a Contradiction: and the Contradiction must lie in one or the other of these two. I am to shew therefore that a Miracle, or a Work above Nature is, not impossible upon either Account.

1. *A Miracle does not imply a Contradiction in the Nature of the Thing.* Every Miraculous effect is either a Production of something by a Supernatural Power or a Suspension or utter Abolition of its Being. The thing produced or destroyed by Miracle, is either Matter it self, or a Form, Quality, Motion, or any other Accident of it. 1. Matter; as suppose a new Portion of it created, beyond the extent of this World; or the Matter of this World; or any determinate Portion of it reduced to nothing. 2. A Form, Quality, Motion or any other Accident of Matter; as suppose, 1. God should endue any part of Matter with a Form, Quality, or any other Accident, above or contrary to what it otherwise might or should have, by the course of Nature. 2. God should devest any part of Matter of any Form, Quality, Motion, *&c.* which otherwise it must have by the course of Nature. Two kinds of Miracles therefore we have here: 1. When a portion of Matter is created a-new, or reduced to nothing. 2. When a Form, Quality, or Motion, or any other Accident of Matter, is produced, suspended, or destroyed in a Supernatural Manner. And to these two are reducible all Effects above or contrary to the Order of Nature; as the whole Frame and Order of Nature, is made up of Matter, and the Forms, Qualities, Motions, and other Accidents thereof.

A Miracle implyes no Contradiction in the Nature of the thing.

Now neither of these implyes a Contradiction in

It implies no Contradiction for Matter to be Created or Annihilated.

the Nature of The thing; 1. It does not imply a Contradiction for a Portion of Matter to be created a-new, or to be reduced to nothing.

Matter in its own Nature is a Being possible and contingent: Possible, because its *Idea* or Conception is not amere *Chimæra* and a Notion that destroys it self: contingent, because it's *Idea* or Conception does not include necessity of Existence. If matter therefore be in its own Nature a thing possible, then (unless the Matter of the present World be extended *in infinitum* (which is a Contradiction) there is still room and possibility for more to be created: but this must be by Miracle, *quia ex nihilo nihil fit naturaliter*. Again, if matter be in its own Nature a contingent being, the Matter of the World, or any determinate Portion of it may cease to be, or be reduced to nothing, but this too must be by Miracle, *quia in nihilum nihil revertitur naturaliter*. Possibile therefore it is in the Nature of the thing for a Portion of *Matter* to be created a-new, or reduced to nothing.

Nor for the Forms &c. of Natural Bodies to be Supernaturally produced, or destroyed. Exod. 7. 10. Ibid. v. 20. 8. v. 17. John 2.

2. It does not imply a Contradiction for a Form, Quality, Motion, or other Accident of Matter to be produced, suspended, or destroyed in a Supernatural manner. For instance, the Form of a *Serpent* to be produced, and again destroyed, in *Aarons Rod*: the form and qualities of *Blood*, in the *Waters* of the *Nile*; of *Lice*, in the *Dust of the Earth*; of *Wine*, in the *Water at the Marriage Feast at* Cana *of* Galilee. The qualities and powers of *Sight* in the *Blind*, *Hearing* in the *Deaf*, *Speech* in the *Dumb*, *Strengh* in the *Lame*, *Health* in the *Sick*, *Life* in the *Dead*: lastly the form of *Bread*, or the very *Humane Nature* it self in the matter of a *Stone*. The motion of *Ten degrees back-*

ward, in the *Sun*, for *a Sign to* Hezekiah, and the Suſpenſion of his Natural Motion for a conſiderable time, at the requeſt of *Joſhua*. the production or determination of *Fire from Heaven*, at the Word and Prayer of *Elijah*, upon his Sacrifice, and the Captains &c. ſent to apprehend him: and the ſuſpenſion of the action of Fire in *Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace*. The production or determination of the *Wind* to bring the *Locuſts*, and drive them back, and to force back the *Waters* of the *Red-Sea*: at the *ſtretching forth of* Moſes's Rod: And the *ceaſing* of the *Wind and Storm* at our *Saviours* command.

2 Kings 20. v. 11. Joſh. 10. v. 13. 1 Kings 18. 38. 2 Kings 1. 9, 12. Dan. 3. 27. Exod. 10. 12, 14. 21.

In all theſe Inſtances there is nothing done, but only a Form, Quality, Motion, or the like, produced, ſuſpended, or deſtroyed in the parts of Matter, by a Power above Nature. And that nothing of all this implies any Contradiction in the Nature of the thing, may be thus made to appear. Matter in its own Nature is indifferently ſuſceptible of any Form or Qualities imaginable, and therefore is in it ſelf capable at any time of being without thoſe Forms and Qualities which it has, or of having any others inſtead thereof. Capable it is of being without any particular Forms & Qualities which it has, becauſe they are each of them contingent & accidental to Matter conſidered in its own Nature: For inſtance, that it ſhould have ſuch Magnitude, Figure, Texture, Order and Scituation, Motion or Reſt of its ſenſible or inſenſible parts, and conſtitute a Body of ſuch a particular Nature, endowed with ſuch and ſuch Qualities peculiar to it. Capable likewiſe it is at any time of having any Forms or Qualities indifferently, becauſe in its own Nature conſidered it is ſuſceptible of any, and in it's own Nature conſidered, not determined to receive any one more

than

than another. Now if this be so, it is then possible for any Form or Quality to be produced, in any part of Matter, at any time; or to be suspended, or destroyed utterly, in that Body which is endued with it: and consequently for any part of Matter to be endued with such a Form or Quality, which otherwise it could or ought not to have by the Course of Nature; or, on the other hand to be devested of that Form or Quality, which otherwise by the Course of Nature it must have had and kept. For instance, the *water* at the *Marriage Feast in* Cana *of* Galilee, could not at the bare Word or Will of Christ by the Course of Nature have its Form changed into the Form of *Wine*, and yet the Matter in it's own Nature was capable of receiving the Form of Wine, and capable too of being without the Form of Water, though left to it self and the Order of Nature it must have kept it. If capable of losing the one and receiving the other, then it was possible for it to be turned from the one into the other: if possible, then within the Sphere of *Omnipotence* to effect it: by a *Miracle* though, *Quia quid libet non fit ex quolibet Naturaliter.*

All Motion in Matter capable of being suspended or destroyed.

The like may be said of Motion in Matter: it is wholely contingent and accidential to it. It might in it's own Nature considered have for ever been without it, and so have continued one great unwieldy Mass: now it has so great a quantity of Motion impressed, yet all it's part may be again reduced to rest, not by the Course of Nature indeed, but yet by a Power working above and contrary to Nature. To press this further home, The whole order of Nature, ever since the Production of it, has depended upon the Motion first impressed upon the parts of Matters

and

and the Power given them to transfer their Motions from one to another: for hereupon depends all the Variety of Forms and Qualities, all the various Productions in the World, wherein the Order of Nature consists. Now this Motion, and this Power of transferring and communicating it, was at first contingent, and so might not have been impressed upon Matter, is contingent still, and so may be now destroyed, and then what becomes of the Order of Nature.

There are therefore things possible which it is above the power of Nature to effect, as the creation of Matter, *&c.* Other things which are contrary to Nature and it's established Order, as the annihilation of the Matter of the whole World, the suspension of that *Motion* in the parts of *Matter*, whereupon the whole Order of Nature depends, the Production of any Form or Qualities in Matter, howsoever in the Order of Nature unqualified to receive them, *&c.* In a Word, The Matter of the whole World, and every Form, Quality, and Motion of Bodies therein are things contingent, and so capable either not to be, or to be othewise. And consequently the whole Frame and Order of Nature may be altered, suspended, or reduced into nothing. A *Miracle* therefore,. which is some of these Effects, *does not imply a Contradiction in the Nature of the Thing.*

The production of a Miracle not repugnant to the Nature of God.

2. *A Miracle is not repugnant to the Nature of God, and his infinite Perfections.* Not to his *Power*, because it is the Effect of it, and not of a Principle opposing it self to him. Not to his *Justice*, because all Nature is his own: nor his *Goodness*, because never made use of but to the best purposes. But rather highly Serviceable to both, as it pleases him to make use of

of it either to execute Judgment upon notorious Sinners in an exemplary manner, or to defend and protect the Innocent and Pious Man by the moſt ſignal inſtances of Providence and mercy. Not to his *Wiſdom*, becauſe the frame and order of Nature is admirably fitted to the ends of it: but Miracles are ordained for higher purpoſes and ſpecial and emergent occaſions. For inſtance, if God be pleaſed to reveal himſelf to Man in an extraordinary manner, to enter into a new Covenant with us, and to propound to us new Terms of favour and reconciliation; to authorize ſome holy and inſpired Perſons to be his Meſſengers and Embaſſadors from Heaven, and to atteſt their Commiſſion by his Letters of Credence; nay to cloath himſelf with Humane Nature, and yet to dart forth the Rays of his Divinity through the vail of Fleſh. Upon theſe grand and important occaſions, what ſure and infallible Evidence can we have that God himſelf ſpeaks to us either by his *Prophets* or his *Son*, but by a *Miracle*? but by *Nature's* ſitting down and being ſuſpended a while, to ſhew that one *greater* than Nature *is there*, that God himſelf is then preſent by his immediate extraordinary Power as well as Revelation? It is not therefore (as *Spinoza* below profanely ſuggeſts) *that God has created Nature ſo impotent, and given her Laws and Rules ſo barren, as that he is compelled ſometimes to help her by new Ordinances and Supplies of Vertue, in order to her Support and Conſervation, and that things may ſucceed according to his intention and deſign:* It is not, I ſay, upon this Account that God has obliged himſelf to Work a *Miracle* upon ſpecial occaſions; but becauſe Nature was only fitted to the ends of *Nature*, and ſupernatural and extraordinary

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traordinary means prov[illegible] this, either the Law of Natural and ſupernatural. Nor laſtly, or Humane Inſtitution. racle in any wiſe repugnant to the branches of it, are Divine Nature or Counſel, as if he whom they were *novo, ex tempore*, and upon the ſudden conſtant and has by one eternal immutable Act of his Wis firſt vio- the Order of all events Natural or above Nature. daily this will appear more clearly in the Anſwer I ſhall giv. to his Arguments, to which I now come.

His Propoſition to be proved is, *That nothing happens contrary to Nature, but Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.*

His Arguments for the proof of this Propoſition are two. Tr. p. 6.

1. *Becauſe the Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God, and therefore involve eternal neceſſity and truth.* Spinoza's *Arguments for the Truth of his firſt Propoſition.*

2. *Becauſe the Power of Nature is the Power of God, and therefore as infinite as God himſelf.*

1. *Becauſe the Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God*, &c.

In the proſecution of this Argument; it will appear: Arg. 1.

1. That he takes the Word *Nature* in another ſenſe than this Queſtion properly admits.

2. That his Argument as it proceeds upon his own Principles, terminates directly in flat *Atheiſme* or *Idolatry.*

3. That, ſetting aſide his own Principles, his Argument may in ſome ſenſe be true, and yet not infer the truth of his Concluſion.

1. *He takes the Word Nature in another ſenſe than this Queſtion properly admits.* By *Nature* (as I ſhewed above) *In this Argument he takes the Word Nature in another*

of it either to execute Judgment upon notorious Sinners in an exemplary manner, or to defend and protect the Innocent and Pious Man by the moſt ſignal inſtances of Providence and mercy. Not to his *Wiſdom*, becauſe the frame and order of Nature is admirably fitted to the ends of it: but Miracles are ordained for higher purpoſes and ſpecial and emergent occaſions. For inſtance, if God be pleaſed to reveal himſelf to Man in an extraordinary manner, to enter into a new Covenant with us, and to propound to us new Terms of favour and reconciliation; to authorize ſome holy and inſpired Perſons to be his Meſſengers and Embaſſadors from Heaven, and to atteſt their Commiſſion by his Letters of Credence; nay to cloath himſelf with Humane Nature, and yet to dart forth the Rays of his Divinity through the vail of Fleſh. Upon theſe grand and important occaſions, what ſure and infallible Evidence can we have that God himſelf ſpeaks to us either by his *Prophets* or his *Son*, but by a *Miracle*? but by *Nature's* ſitting down and being ſuſpended a while, to ſhew that one *greater* than Nature *is there*, that God himſelf is then preſent by his immediate extraordinary Power as well as Revelation? It is not therefore (as *Spinoza* below profanely ſuggeſts) *that God has created Nature ſo impotent, and given her Laws and Rules ſo barren, as that he is compelled ſometimes to help her by new Ordinances and Supplies of Vertue, in order to her Support and Conſervation, and that things may ſucceed according to his intention and deſign:* It is not, I ſay, upon this Account that God has obliged himſelf to Work a *Miracle* upon ſpecial occaſions; but becauſe Nature was only fitted to the ends of *Nature*, and ſupernatural and extraordinary

P. 7

traordinary means provided for Ends extraordinary and ſupernatural. Nor laſtly, Is the Working of a Miracle in any wiſe repugnant to the *immutability* of the Divine Nature or Counſel, as if he Acted therein *de novo*, *ex tempore*, and upon the ſudden; becauſe he has by one eternal immutable Act of his Will, ſettled the Order of all events Natural or above Nature. But this will appear more clearly in the Anſwer I ſhall give to his Arguments, to which I now come.

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sense than the Question admits.

above) is meant here, the whole aggregate and compages of Bodies in the World, and the Order wherein they act amongst one another. In this sense therefore *Spinoza* must be presumed to prove, That nothing happens contrary to Nature, which whether he does or no will immediately appear. In the Conclusion of this first Argument, to these Words, *Nihil igitur in Naturâ contingit, quod ipsius Legibus universalibus repugnat*, &c. He subjoyns this Marginal Note, *N. B. me hic per Naturam non intelligere solam materiam ejusq; affectiones, sed præter materiam alia infinita.* The *Translator*, I confess, has it not (whether omitted as impertinent only, or as that which would too openly discover the weakness of his reasoning, I do not determine) but I shall take leave to consider what he has as *Spinoza's* and not his own.

Tractat. Theolog. Polit. c. 6. p. 100.

His Proposition true, if he take the Word in this sense, but not to the Question.

Now if *Spinoza* take the Word *Nature* in so great a Latitude as to understand by it an infinite number of other things besides Matter, he may find it pretty easie to reduce all things within its compass: and if he make the *Laws of Nature* in his sense of so great extent, it may be hard for any thing not to fall within their Circuit and Jurisdiction: but then the Philosopher's way of Arguing will be as much beside the Question, as a Miracle is beside Nature.

The *Schoolmen* where they treat of Laws, make the first division of them into the Eternal Law, and those that are derived from it. The Eternal two-fold. 1. The Order whereby God eternally decreed to do all things. 2. The Order which he decreed to prescribe to his Creatures, to be observed by them according to their several Natures and Conditions. The latter is branched out in these particulars, the Law of Natural Agents,

of

of Angels and Men; and this, either the Law of Natural Reaſon, Divine Revelation, or Humane Inſtitution. This ſecond Eternal Law, and the branches of it, are ſuch as that the ſeveral Agents to whom they were given, may ſwerve from and not Act in a conſtant and uniform obedience to them. So the Angels firſt violated their Law; then Mankind theirs, as they daily do all Laws Natural and Poſitive, Divine and Humane. The natural Agents indeed, as not endued with freedom of Will, obſerve one conſtant Order and Tenor if left to themſelves: yet may either ceaſe to Act, or Act otherwiſe, if God in his eternal purpoſe think fit to interpoſe, who can then either ſuſpend their Operations, or determine them to act beyond their Sphere, beſide their uſual courſe, and contrary to their natural tendencies and the Laws of their Motion. But the firſt Eternal Laws is of univerſal extent, and holds inviolably. Nothing can fall out beſide, above, or contrary to it. It directs to its own grand purpoſes whatever ſtrayes from the particular Laws of its Creation, draws good out of evil, and makes all Events conſpire to the ſetting forth of the Glory of God. It ordains the ſins of lapſed Angels and Men, to the irrevokable Damnation of the firſt, and the Redemption of the latter, by the moſt ſurprizing and myſterious Methods of love and mercy. It provides for a ſuppliment to the loſt or decayed light of Nature, the Revelations of Law and Goſpel by *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, our bleſſed *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles*; and to atteſt their Divine Authority and Miſſion, ordains Nature to act above or contrary to her ſelf by an *obedientiall* Power. The ſame eternal Act of the Divine Counſel decreeing the production of miraculous Effects

upon emergent occasions, which first determined into Act the whole Frame and Order of Nature.

We see here an *Universal Law* from whence all things follow, and contrary to which nothing does or can fall out. An Order eternal, fixt and immutable, set down with himself by that Supream being, *who worketh all things* κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ Eph. 1. v. 11. That by this he hath appointed times for Miraculous and Supernatural Effects, as well as this lasting Period for the constant and settled operations of Nature. If this be *Spinoza's Law of Nature*, where he extends the Signification of that Word infinitely beyond the compass of the material World, and the order whereby Natural Bodies act therein; his Proposition may be true, *That nothing falls out contrary to Nature, but Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order. But then*, 1. He takes the Word *Nature* in a different sense from all the World besides; 2. Wholely leaves the Question about the possibility of Miracles, that being consistent with the Truth of his Proposition if taken in that sense.

His Argument as it proceeds upon his own Principles terminates in flat Atheisme *or* Idolatry.

And I wish his sense were so *Orthodox* as this I have hinted, and that all his fault were only that he has mistaken the state of the Question, and the meaning of the Terms of it. But it will appear far otherwise when we come to examine upon what Principles his Argument proceeds.

His *Argument* is this, *The Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God, and therefore involve eternal necessity and truth.* Ergo, *nothing can fall out contrary to Nature, but Nature keeps an eternal, fixt, and immutable Order.* The ground of the Argument lies in this, *That whatever God Wills or Decrees, involves eternal*

necessity

neceſſity and truth. For the proof whereof *Spinoza* referrs us to his Fourth Chapter. The Argument which he brings for it there, is drawn *from the Identity of the Divine Will and Underſtanding*, and it proceeds thus, All the difference between the Underſtanding and Will of God is, he ſays, onely in our conception, and that in this manner, *We conceive God to underſtand any thing, as, for inſtance, the Nature of a Triangle, when we regard only this, That the Nature* (v. c.) *of a Triangle is contained eternally in the Divine Nature as an eternal Truth. We conceive God to will the ſame thing, when we regard this farther, That the Nature* (v. c.) *of a Triangle is ſo contained in the Divine, not upon account of the neceſſity of the nature of a Triangle it ſelf, but upon account of the neceſſity of the Divine Nature: and that all the neceſſity of the nature of a Triangle and its properties, as they are conceived as eternal Truths, depends not upon the neceſſity of its own Nature, but the Divine.* So that for God to Will or Decree any thing, is for the ſame *to be contained neceſſarily in the Divine Nature, by reaſon of the neceſſity of it, as an eternal truth:* And therefore, *Whatever God wills or decrees involves eternal truth and neceſſity.* Tractat Theologico-Polit. c. 4. p. 70.

This is his *Principle*, which he borrows from his *Fourth Chapter*, and we ſee it is grounded upon a particular Notion which he had formed in his Brain of the Divine Will and Underſtanding. This conceit he does not farther explain or make out in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*; and therefore, to run up his Argument to the head, I ſhall conſult his *Opera Poſthuma* for a Scheme of his Principles from whence to deduce it. There, in the *Firſt Part of his Ethicks*, which

which treats *de Deo*, he has this Doctrine, *That there is but one Substance in the World, and that is God. That God is a Substance absolutely infinite*, i. e. *a Substance endued with an infinite number of Attributes, each infinite, each displaying his infinite Essence: two whereof are known to us, Cogitation and Extension. That from the necessity of the infinite Essence and Attributes of God do proceed (as properties from an emanative cause) infinite Modes wherein the Divine Nature and Attributes do subsist and act. That Nature and all created Beings are only these various Modes wherein the Divine Essence and Attributes do necessarily display themselves: In particular that all Bodies and finite Spirits are only various Modes of those two infinite Attributes in God, Extension and Cogitation.*

Ethic. p. 1. Prop. 11, 14, 15.

And from these Principles we may indeed deduce not only his conception of what it is in God to understand and to will: but many other Consequences admirably agreeable to *Religion* and *Right Reason*. As, 1. That God is an extended Substance, and extension infinite. 2. That God is the emanative cause of all finite Beings, and they therefore really and identically contained in the Divine Nature, and the same with him. 3. That God subsists in all Bodies and finite Spirits, as a Substance under its necessary Modes flowing from its Essence: and therefore both he himself material and bodily, as being extended, and every body in Nature a part of him. So that now we clearly see the ground whereupon *Spinoza* asserts, *That nothing can happen contrary to Nature*: viz. because God and Nature are one and the same, *God Nature subsistent*, and *Nature God modified*.

And

And why he says, That for *God to will or decree any thing, is for the thing to be contained in his Nature as an eternal truth flowing from the neceſſity of it*, viz. becauſe his Will is only that of an emanative cauſe, and every thing which we conceive produced by the Divine Will, is ſo only in regard that it flows neceſſarily from his Eſſence, as light in the Sun, and heat in the Fire from their very nature. And ſo likewiſe his underſtanding of the ſame thing, is only that he ſees its neceſſary Exiſtence proceeding from the neceſſity of his own Nature.

Here we have a full diſcovery of his Senſe and Scope in this Argument; and it plainly terminates in one of theſe two, *Atheiſm* or *Idolatry*. For to make God and Nature the ſame thing, is either to advance a Creature into the place of God, or (what *Tully* ſays of *Epicurus*) *Oratione relinquere Deum, re tollere.* I ſhall not therefore proſecute his Argument, ſo far, as to confute him through the whole Set of his Principles: nor take my ſelf to be obliged, in order to prove the poſſibility of a *Work above Nature*, to go ſo far about as to prove firſt the Being of a God above it. But his Argument may deſerve a little Conſideration, ſetting aſide his Principles, and that only in order to ſtate how far the Laws of Nature may be granted to be the *Decrees and Volitions of God*, and whether and how far thereupon they *involve eternal neceſſity and truth.*

De Naturâ Deorum *l.* 1.

His Argument, ſetting aſide his Principles, may be true, and yet not infer the truth of his Concluſion.

His Argument therefore is in form this, *Whatever God Wills or Decrees, involves eternal neceſſity and truth. The Laws of Nature are the Decrees and Volitions of God.* E. *They involve eternal neceſſity and truth.* E. *Nothing can fall out contrary to them.*

The

The Laws of Nature may be conſidered as in Nature it ſelf, or as in the Author of it. In Nature it ſelf they ſignifie the determinations of Bodies to act in ſuch or ſuch a manner. In the Author of it they ſignifie thoſe Decrees whereby the Order of Nature is eſtabliſhed, and particular Bodies determined to act in ſuch a particular manner. In this Senſe, I grant that the Laws of Nature are the *Decrees and Volitions of God*. And how they are ſo, and how far thereupon they may be conceived to *involve eternal neceſſity and truth*, may appear from theſe Conſiderations:

How the Laws of Nature are the Decrees of God, and eternal Truth.

1. That there is one grand Univerſal Law, Decree, and Purpoſe of the Divine Will, whereby he eternally ſet down with himſelf the Order wherein to work all things. This Conception is moſt agreeable to the ſimplicity and immutability of the Divine Nature. To his ſimplicity, that as his Nature, ſo the Act of his Will, ſhould be perfectly one, and not multiplied *in infinitum* in proportion to the variety of Effects ordained and regulated by it. To his immutability, that we ſhould not ſuppoſe him to be daily enacting new Laws and Decrees, but that he works all things by a Decree co-eternal to himſelf. And this Conception is cleared by our parallel apprehenſions about the Divine Underſtanding. The Objects thereof are temporary, yet the Act of his Knowledg whereby he ſees them eternal: they are manifold and various, yet that ſimple and uniform. Therefore as by one Act of his Underſtanding he ſees *ab æterno* all things future in their ſeveral times, ſo by one Act of his Will he ordains them all.

2. That in this univerſal Law are included, *Secundum noſtrum concipiendi modum*, many particular

Laws

Laws and Decrees eſtabliſhing the Order of particular Events, neceſſary and contingent, natural and above Nature, in their particular times and places.

3. That theſe particular Laws and Decrees have each (in ſubordination to the univerſal) a limited and determinate compaſs of times, places, and events, wherein they take effect.

4. That yet each of them does certainly take effect within that determinate compaſs to which it is limited. And therefore

5. That a Propoſition declaring that ſuch a Law and Decree will certainly take effect, is true; and the truth of it neceſſary and *ab æterno* by vertue of that Law and Decree.

6. That yet as the Law it ſelf and the Decree *is*, ſo is the neceſſary and eternal Truth of that Propoſition: *viz.* It is neceſſary and true *ab æterno*, that this Law and Decree ſhall take effect within that determinate compaſs of times, places, and events, whereto it is limited, and no further.

Now the Laws and Decrees by which the Order of Nature is eſtabliſhed, are ſuch particular Laws and Decrees; and ſuch is their eternal Truth and Neceſſity. For Inſtance, The motion of the Sun is an Ordinance in Nature, proceeding from Gods Will and Decree: Yet ſo limited (in ſubordination to his univerſal Law and Purpoſe) to a determinate compaſs, as not to take effect at ſome points of time within that period for which Nature is eſtabliſhed: I mean at that time, when the Sun ſtood ſtill at *Joſhua*'s word, and when it went back ſo many degrees for a ſign to King *Hezekiah*. So that the ſame univerſal Purpoſe and Decrees of God might ſettle the order of

the Suns motion, and thereupon it be neceſſary and true *ab æterno* that the Sun ſhall move in this Order; and yet withal ordain, that at ſuch times notwithſtanding the Sun ſhould ſtand ſtill or go back, and thereupon it be as neceſſary and true *ab æterno*, that at thoſe points of time the Sun ſhould go back or ſtand ſtill. The Laws therefore of Natural Agents may in this ſenſe be the *Decrees of God*, and *involve eternal neceſſity and truth*; and yet it may be poſſible for ſome certain effects to fall out contrary to them, *viz.* without that compaſs within which they are limited to take effect, and no farther. But if *Spinoza* will have it, That whatever God wills to come to paſs in ſuch a time, muſt therefore be always; or, that whatever Order God ſettles for ſuch a determinate compaſs, muſt, becauſe he wills and ſettles it, hold eternally: I deny that in this ſenſe every *Law and Decree of God involves eternal Neceſſity and Truth.*

It is eternally neceſſary and true, That whatever God Decrees to be, ſhall be: if he decree any thing to be and endure to perpetuity, it is eternally true and neceſſary that it ſhall be perpetually; if he decree it to ſuch a compaſs, it is *ab æterno* neceſſary and true that it ſhall hold ſo long, and his Decree or the truth and neceſſity of the Effect, conſequent thereupon, is not violated if it hold no longer.

So much therefore may be ſaid in Anſwer to his firſt Argument to prove that *Nothing can happen contrary to Nature*, &c. The Sum is, That he miſtakes the meaning of the Terms of the Queſtion. That he makes Nature the ſame with God, and ſo (beſides his taking the word in a ſenſe of his own) he in effect

fect rejects the Existence of a Deity in Order to overthrow the belief of Miracles. Lastly, That in the sense wherein I have considered his Argument, it may be true, and yet his Conclusion not follow from it.

His Second Argument is, *Because the Power of Nature is the power of God, and therefore as infinite as himself. E. Nothing can fall out without its compass, or contrary to it.* Spinoza's second Argument for his first Proposition. Tr. p. 7.

His ground whereupon he proceeds in this Argument is to be sure the very same conception of the Divine Nature, *viz.* That Nature is nothing but an infinite variety of Modifications of the Divine Essence, and the power of it consequently nothing but the infinite fecundity of the Divine Essence determining it necessarily to exert it self in all the infinite variety of the modes of its being. I shall therefore onely give this Argument so much consideration as it may require, setting aside his Principles. The power of Nature is the force that natural causes have to act each in their several manners, and the vertue and efficacy of the whole arising from the joynt concurrence of the several parts in their distinct Operations: This, to speak properly, is all resolved into a *Vis motrix* impressed upon matter, enabled to act by Gods Power, and determined to do it by his Will. This therefore certainly must be different from the power of its Author, in as much as the powers must be different if the Subjects differ to which they belong. But granting that the power of Nature is *virtually and origionally* (though not *formally*) the Divine Power exerting it self in Nature as its Instrument; Yet it no more follows thereupon, that the power

of Nature must be infinite, then it follows that because the motion of the Sun is the motion of Nature, therefore it is of as great extent as the motion of the whole frame of Nature besides. Or because the Power that moves the hand is the power of the Soul, that therefore the whole Sphere of the Souls Power in the Body is no larger than the hand. The Argument is from a *particular* to an *universal*. Gods power, though simple and indivisible, is yet unlimited. It may act far beyond that compass wherein it does, and therefore infinitly beyond the limits of Nature. It exerts it self both in a natural and supernatural way; and both kinds of effects proceed from one and the same indivisible omnipotence: which is no more multiplied by the variety of effects that flow from it, than the power of the Soul as it moves the hands, and the feet, the eye, and the tongue.

These are all the Arguments he brings for the proof of his first Proposition. The rest is the Conclusion he draws from the whole, *viz. What a Miracle is: That* (it being proved that all Supernatural Effects are impossible) *a Miracle can be only an effect inexplicable by our own observation, or the Principle of Nature known to us.* Having therefore proved that supernatural Effects are not impossible, and answered his Arguments for the contrary, I may take leave to draw a Conclusion contradictory to his, That a Miracle is not only what he says, but an Effect beside, above, or contrary to the Order of Nature.

Tr p. 8

The second thing he undertakes is, *To prove that by Miracles we cannot know the Essence, Existence,*

Proposition 2. Tr. P. 2.

or

or Providence of God: but that all these may be better known by the fixt and immutable Order of Nature. His Design in this seems to be to destroy the Authority and Credit of Miracles, by shewing that they are not proofs sufficient of what they are designed for. But in the framing of this Proposition, he mistakes the end, for which they are design'd. For

In the framing of this Proposition he mistakes the end for which Miracles are designed.

1. The design of Miracles is not to make a discovery (at least immediately and by themselves) of the *Essence* of God. They are proper and meet evidences of the truth of any Revelation, and if in that Revelation it please God to make any supernatural display of his own Nature, then Miracles may be said mediately to discover to us the Essence of God; otherways they demonstrate no other Attribute of God but his power, *viz.* as it is able to suspend the Operations of Nature, or to act above it.

2. Neither do they tend in any peculiar manner to prove the *Existence* of a Deity, but rather suppose it: *viz.* That there is a Supream Being who is the Author of Nature, who gave it such a Power and set it such Laws whereby to act; which Power, and which Laws, a Miracle being either above or contrary to, proves thereupon (not that God is, but) that it is he who then acts by his own immediate hand, and not Nature. But, for any proof it gives us of the Being of a God, it is onely in the same way that every natural Effect demonstrates it, by leading us to a first Cause.

3. Miracles are indeed sufficient Evidences of the Divine *Providence*; that God does take upon him and actually exercise the Government of the World; that he does not leave Nature to her self, but some-

times

times interpoſes and ſets her aſide: That he does not ſit an unconcerned Spectator of the Actions of Men, but ſometimes in a moſt ſignal manner rewards or puniſhes them here in this life. Yet the demonſtration of Gods *Providence* is not the proper and primary end of ſupernatural Effects, but

4. A Miracle is properly intended to prove, 1. Immediately, the immediate power and preſence of God Acting himſelf in an extraordinary manner in the working of it. 2. (By Vertue of this evident Demonſtration of Gods immediate extraordinary preſence) the Divine Authority and Miſſion of that perſon whom God has been pleaſed to make his Inſtrument in the effecting of it; at whoſe word or requeſt the Order of Nature is ſuſpended, which we cannot ſuppoſe God would permit either for no end at all, or for one ſo repugnant to his Sanctity and Goodneſs, as to aſſiſt an Impoſture.

Thus much therefore we may know by miracles, not what God is in his Nature, nor his Exiſtence any better than we may know it by any Effect of Nature: but his Providence, his extraordinary preſence and power, and the Authority of that perſon whoſe Divine Miſſion it atteſts. We are next to enquire whether his Arguments are more ſufficient to diſprove the authority of Miracles in this regard.

His Arguments for his 2. Propoſ. from Reaſon, and Scripture.

His arguments for the Truth of his ſecond Propoſition are from Reaſon and Scripture, From Reaſon he attempts to prove it three wayes.

1. *Becauſe the belief of the poſſibility of a Miracle does vertually introduce meer Scepticiſme*, and conſequently is ſo far from proving the Eſſence, Exiſtence, or Providence of God, that it *takes away*

the

the certainty both of the existence of a Deity and every thing else.

2. *Because a Miracle is a work that transcends our Capacity to understand it, and therefore what we understand not, it self cannot lead us to the understanding of any thing else.*

3. *Because a Miracle is a thing finite, and therefore cannot be a fit* Medium *to prove the being of an Agent of infinite Power.*

His first Argument for his 2 Propos. from Reason.

1. *The belief of the possibility of a Miracle virtually introduces meer Scepticisme, and so takes away the certainty both of the being of God and every thing else.* This Argument strikes as much at the belief of Miracles themselves as of any thing else upon their Credit and Authority: for there can be no Reason to believe any thing, which to believe obliges me to doubt of every thing else as impossible to be certainly known. The ground whereupon he asserts that the belief of Miracles *leads us to Scepticisme*, is, *because it takes away the certain Truth of those Notions from whence we conclude the being of a God or any thing else that we know*; and *that this it does in as much as it supposes a Power in God able to alter the Truth of these Notions, for this too he must be able to do, if able to change the course of Nature.*

The belief of Miracles does not introduce Scepticisme.

By these Notions may be understood two things; 1. The Principles of Truth whereupon we build all our knowledge. 2. Our own *Idea's* and apprehensions of things. The former are either the common Principles of Natural Light, *viz.* Axioms evident upon the first apprehension of the Terms, as *That a thing cannot be and not be at the same time, the whole is greater than any part*, &c. Or 2. the definitions of things,

things, and propositions ascribing to them their Nature and Properties: as *Homo est animal rationale*, *Triangulum habet tres angulos æquales duobus rectis*, &c. Or 3. Propositions containing the mutual respects of things, as *that Cruelty and Injustice are repugnant to the Nature of God*, *Theft and Murder to the Nature of a sociable Creature*, &c. Now these principles of Truth are all necessary, and immutable, and the Truth of them does not depend upon the being or order of Nature: a possibility therefore of change in the order of Nature does not imply that by the same Power the truth of these Notions may be altered. They are, first, necessary and immutable, because it implies a contradiction for them to be false, v. c. *for the whole to be no greater than any part*, *Man not to be a rational creature*, *God to be cruel or unjust*, &c. 2. They are true independently upon the being or order of Nature. If God should destroy the whole frame of Nature, yet it were true notwithstanding, *that the whole* Body *were bigger than any part.* If he should reduce Mankind into nothing, it were still true notwithstanding, *That the nature of Man consists in the Union of a rational Soul, and a Body endued with life and sense.* God may turn one thing into another, and make the same Matter appear under a Form above or contrary to what it should have by the course of Nature, but he cannot *make it be and not be*, *be of this Nature and of another*, *at the same time.* He can suspend the Actions of his Creatures, but yet cannot make them *Act and not Act both together.* In short, however God by his Power may alter or suspend the Order of Generations in Nature, yet this Principle will hold true, that in an order

order of ſucceſſive generations of Men there muſt be ſome firſt Man, and this firſt Man muſt have a Cauſe that is not Man, and this Cauſe muſt either be it ſelf, or lead us at laſt to, an infinite Supream Being. So that the *exiſtence of a God may be deduced from certain and neceſſary Principles, though the Order of Nature be capable of being changed by his Almighty Power.*

The altering therefore of the courſe of Nature, makes no alteration in the principles of Knowledg. But does it not infer a Power in God to change our Notions and Apprehenſions of them and of every thing elſe? A Phyſical Power indeed it does, as it proves him *Omnipotent:* but this will not drive us to *Scepticiſme*, while we are certain that it is as much repugnant to his *Veracity* and *Goodneſs* as compatible to his *Power* barely conſidered. For it is impoſſible that a Being infinitely Good and Holy ſhould impoſe upon his Creatures, and implant ſuch Notions in their Minds as would neceſſarily induce them to believe a Lye, or ſo alter their apprehenſions of things, as to make it impoſſible for them to make a true Judgment by the uſe of their own reaſon.

The belief of Miracles therefore does not *lead us unto Scepticiſme*, and ſo does not *take away the certainty of the Being of a God*, but yet perhaps *it may not be a fit* Medium *to prove either his Exiſtence, or his Proovidence, or to declare his Nature to us.* And this upon two Accounts. 1. *Becauſe a Miracle is a Work that tranſcends our capacity to underſtand it, and therefore what we underſtand not it ſelf, cannot lead us* to the *underſtanding of any thing elſe.* 2. *Becauſe a Miracle is a* Arg. 2. Tr. p. 10. Arg. 2. Tr. p. 11

thing finite, and therefore cannot be a fit Medium *to prove the being of an Agent of infinite Power.* To the *First*, a Miracle is a Work that transcends our capacity to understand it; i. e. it is beyond the compass of our Knowledge to deduce it from natural Causes, and good reason, because it is beyond their power and efficacy to Effect it. But yet so far it is within our Capacity, that it is possible for us to know whether it be an effect supernatural or not, and when it is known to be such it is sufficient to demonstrate the immediate operation of God's Power and Providence.

To the *Second*, nothing is more false or groundless than that Assertion. It is so far from being true, that a finite Effect cannot be a Proof of an infinite Cause, that every finite Effect is so; either immediately, as when the Effect though finite exceeds the force and efficacy of any finite being in the Order and Sphere wherein it acts, or mediately when the Effect is produced by a train of finite Causes, which yet must have had their own being and their first motion or power to act from an infinite Agent. The argument for an Infinite from the existence of finite beings, proceeds thus, every finite being is contingent, and so might not have been; therefore the reason of its being must not be in it self, but in something else, *viz.* the Cause that produced it. Again, every finite being has limits of Perfection; these cannot be set by it self, but by something else which gave it such a degree of Perfection and no greater; and this must be the cause that produced it. If this Cause be finite too, it must proceed from another, and the Question will recur till we stop, at last in a Cause self-existent and infinite.

So

So much therefore may be ſaid in anſwer to his Arguments from reaſon for the former part of his ſecond Propoſition, *viz. That by Miracles we cannot know the Eſſence, Exiſtence or Providence of God.* To what he ſays for the other part, *viz. That all theſe may be better known by the fixt and immutable Order of Nature*, the Anſwer may be ſhorter. His reaſon is, *becauſe the Laws of Nature are infinite, eternal, and immutable, and therefore in ſome meaſure indicate to us the infinity, eternity, and immutability of God:* or rather (to make him ſpeak more plainly out of his *Opera Poſthuma*) becauſe *God and Nature are all one*, and *the more I know of Nature the more I underſtand of the modifications of the Divine Eſſence.* But if he tells us that the belief of Miracles leads us to *Scepticiſme*, we may reply that this Diſcovery of the Divine Eſſence which he pretends to make from Nature, will rather carry us either to *Atheiſme* or *Idolatry.*

I proceed to his Arguments from Scripture, which are two.

1. He argues from *Deut* 13. v. 1, 2, 3. *Becauſe a Miracle* (as is plain from that place) *may be wrought by a Perſon that deſigns to introduce the worſhip of a falſe God.*

2. He argues *from the corrupt notions the* Iſraelites *had of God, and his Providence; notwithſtanding ſo many Miracles wrought among them.*

The words in *Deut.* 13. v. 1, 2, 3. are theſe. *If there ariſe among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or Wonder come to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, let us go after other Gods (which thou* Arg. 1. *from Scripture.* Tr. p. 13.

haſt not known) *and let us ſerve them; thou ſhalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet, or Dreamer of Dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart and with all your Soul. And that Prophet or that Dreamer of Dreams ſhall be put to death,* &c. *From hence he argues, a Miracle may be wrought by one that deſigns to introduce the Worſhip of a falſe God.* Ergo, *by Miracles we may be as eaſily induced to embrace the Worſhip of a falſe God, as of the true.* E. *God cannot be made known to us by Miracles.*

Though a falſe Prophet may work a Miracle, yet Miracles ſufficient evidences of a true Prophet.

This is a difficulty commonly propounded for theſe Words in *Deut.* viz. *How Miracles can be an undoubted evidence of the authority of a Prophet and the truth of his Doctrine, & yet it be poſſible for a Miracle to be wrought by a falſe Prophet in the higheſt degree:* viz. *a Preacher of Idolatry.* And the beſt way to give a clear and ſatisfactory Anſwer to it, will be to conſider the utmoſt force of it as it is urged from this place. The *Iſraelites* to whom theſe Words were ſpoken, had already a Law given them, and the Authority of it atteſted by unqueſtionable Miracles; the ſame Law repeated again in this book of *Deut.* with a repetition likewiſe of the Hiſtory of thoſe mighty Works which had been wrought for it's confirmation. Their Religion therefore being thus ſettled, to fortifie them againſt all Temptations that might draw them to the Worſhip of the Gods of the Nations round about them, they are fore-warned in this place not to give ear to any Perſon that ſhould entice them to *Idolatry*, though he ſhould work a Miracle to confirm the Authority of his falſe Doctrine; for that God might poſſibly permit ſuch a Perſon to work

work a Miracle meerly to try the ſtedfaſtneſs of their Faith and Adherence to his Worſhip. This is the Caſe wherein thoſe Words (*Deut.* 13.) muſt be underſtood to be ſpoken; and this is all that can be rationally drawn from them, that God may permit a Miracle to be wrought by a falſe Prophet after he has eſtabliſhed the true Religion, and fore-warned his people not to believe a Miracle againſt it. We are to enquire therefore whether *if this be poſſible, Miracles can be ſufficient evidences of a true Prophet.*

The Argument is in form this, *If God after he has eſtabliſhed the true Religion, and fore-warned his people not to believe a Miracle againſt it, may permit a falſe Prophet to work a Miracle to try the ſtedfaſtneſs of their faith; then Miracles are not ſufficient Evidences of a true Prophet.* But *God may in this caſe permit a Miracle to be wrought by a falſe Prophet.* Ergo. If the conſequence is, That Miracles are not *always* ſufficient Evidences, or not in this particular *Caſe*, I readily grant it: If, That they *never* are in any caſe (which muſt be the Concluſion if to the purpoſe.) I deny it: and the reaſon of my denial of it is this, becauſe notwithſtanding an *Impoſtor* may work a Miracle in this caſe, and ſo the Miracle he works be no evidence of a true Prophet: yet in any other caſe (notwithſtanding the force of theſe words) it may be (and I may poſitively ſay is) impoſſible for a true Miracle to be wrought by an *Impoſtor*; and therefore all other Miracles which are not reducible to this Caſe may be certain and infallible Evidences of a true Prophet. For Inſtance, two ſorts of Miracles are excepted from this Caſe. 1. Thoſe Miracles (ſuppoſe) that were wrought among the *Iſraelites*, after

after this warning given them not to believe any person that would seduce them to *Idolatry*, though he should work a Miracle, by persons that did not attempt to seduce them from the Worship of the true God. 2. Those Miracles which were wrought at any time by any persons whose Doctrine the people before whom they were wrought had not been forewarned by God not to believe. And that neither of these could be wrought by an *Impostor*, but both were sufficient Evidences of a true Prophet, I shall demonstrate evidently from these Principles.

1. In every Miracle or supernatural Effect, God must be present (not consenting and assisting only, but) working it himself by his extraordinary Power.

2. This God cannot do (*viz.* alter the course of Nature) for no end, or for any that is mean and trivial.

3. Nor can his end be to deceive or impose upon those persons before whom it is wrought.

4. If his end cannot be to deceive us, and yet he cannot Work a Miracle, but for some great end: it follows, That every Miracle wrought by any person pretending thereupon a Commission to reveal any Doctrine, must either be ordained by God to ratifie and confirm his Commission, and this Miracle cannot be wrought by a false Prophet: or if it be not ordained by God to confirm his Commission, but may be done by him though he be a false Prophet, it must be onely in such a case where sufficient warning has been given to those before whom the Miracle is wrought, that they

are

are not to believe the Authority or Doctrine of that Prophet though he work a Miracle.

5. Therefore in this one Case (where sufficient warning is given us not to believe such a person though he work a Miracle) God may work a Miracle by a false Prophet, and therefore it is no sufficient Evidence of a true: In any other case it is impossible he should work it by a false Prophet, and therefore it is not sufficient Evidence of a true.

All this necessarily follows from the Wisdome, Veracity, and Holiness of God. His Wisdome cannot permit him to work a Miracle by any man for nothing or upon any trivial account: and his *Veracity* and *Holiness* cannot permit him to bear witness to a *Liar* and *Seducer* (working a Miracle and pretending thereupon to a Commission from Heaven to Preach his Doctrine) which he does in working a Miracle by him, unless in such a Case where he gives us warning not to believe him upon the Authority of his Miracle: And in that Case he does not bear Witness to a Liar, because he fore-warns us that his Miracle is not done to attest the Authority of that Person by whom he does it: And so though it were the *setting of his Seal* to his Commission (to use that expression) yet we are sufficiently secured from being imposed upon thereby, because fore-warned that in this case his Seal is to be no Evidence to us, though otherwise it be the cleerest and most convincing Evidence imaginable. A Miracle therefore, where warning before-hand is given against it, may be wrought by a Seducer and Impostor; but where we are not fore-warned against it, it must be wrought by a true: *Ergo, Though in that Case a Miracle is no Evidence*

of

of a true Prophet, yet in every other Case it certainly is, and conſequently, *Though an Impoſtor may work a Miracle*, yet *a Miracle is in moſt caſes an undoubted Evidence of a true Prophet.*

Now the warning or notice given us in this caſe, may be either expreſſed, or implied. *Expreſſed* as in the place fore-mentioned, under the Law; or where we are forbidden to hearken to *falſe Prophets* and *falſe Chriſts, which ſhall do great Signs and Wonders; or to an Angel from Heaven that ſhould Preach another Doctrine, then that we have received* under the Goſpel. *Implied*, as where the Doctrine and Inſtitution of the Goſpel is declared to be the laſt Will of Almighty God, and a Law to endure without alteration or repeal to the end of the World; for if God declare it to be ſuch, this implies that no Doctrine contrary to it, no other Doctrine, is to be embraced, though the perſon preaching it ſhould work a Miracle to confirm his Authority.

Deut. 13.
Matt. 24. 24.
Gal. 1. 8.
Heb. 1, 2.
7. 16, 17.

All other Miracles therefore are Evidences of a true Prophet, except where ſuch warning is given. And thoſe I reduced to two ſorts:

1. Thoſe that were wrought among the *Iſraelites* after the warning given them *Deut.* 13. by any perſon that did not attempt to *ſeduce them from the Worſhip of the true God*; for againſt ſuch a perſon working a Miracle they had no warning, and therefore his Miracle was enough to command their belief.

2. Thoſe wrought at any time by any perſons againſt whoſe Doctrine there had been no warning eign to the perſons before whom the Miracles were wrought. And under theſe two kinds are placed all the

the Miracles whose Authority *Spinoza* would destroy by this Argument. To begin with *Moses*'s, they were wrought before the *Israelites* had any warning to reject the Authority of any Miracles whatsoever: and if after, they were wrought not to sedvce them to *Idolatry* but with the contrary design, *viz.* to settle the Worship of the true God among them. So also *Elijah*'s, to reclaim that people from Idolatry. And the Miracles of our blessed *Saviour* and his *Apostles*, will not I suppose be said by any one to be wrought to seduce the *Jews* from the Worship of the true God. So that if all these Miracles must be excepted from the Case wherein a Miracle may be wrought by a *false Prophet*, his Argument *from the possibility of it* (out of *Deut.* 13.) *against the authority of all Miracles*, falls to the ground.

His other Argument from Scripture is *from the corrupt Notions the* Israelites *had of God and Providence, notwithstanding all the Miracles wrought among them.* He instances in their Worshipping the *Calf* in *Moses*'s absence: In the doubts the Author of the 73 *Psalm* says he had about a Providence; and *Solomon*'s Opinion that all things were governed by chance, which he confesses he once held. To this I answer, 1. I have already intimated that Miracles in themselves do not discover to us what God is in his Nature, any farther than as it is done in the Revelation which they confirm. 2. Therefore I hope he will not say that the Revelation which the *Israelites* had concerning God, was such as was not sufficient if they would have attended to it, to have taught them that God was not to be Worshipped under the resemblance of a *Creature*, much less *his glory to be* Psal. 106. 20.

Argument 2. from Scripture. Tr. p. 14.

turned into the similitude of a Calf. 3. The mighty Works that God did for the Children of *Israel*, were such as might easily have convinced them, that such a base Creature was not *the God that brought them*
Exod. 32. 4. *forth out of the Land of Egypt.* 4. Therefore he ought rather to impute it to the great stupidity and blindness of that People, there being newly converted
Psal. 106. 21. from the worship of the *Egyptian Apis*, and their *forgetting of God their Saviour who had done so great things for them*, than to any insufficiency either in the Miracles to demonstrate God's Power and Providence to them, or in the Law he had newly given them to instruct them how he was to be Worshipped. I pass by what he says of *Solomon* and the Author of the 73 *Psalm*: their doubts were about such things wherein Miracles were not proper means to inform them: *viz.* Why the wicked prosper in this life?

What he has besides under this Head, is, 1. A pro-
Tr. p. 15. fane abuse of the Scripture, instead of an Answer to those plain Expressions therein, where God is said to have wrought his Miracles, *that he might make*
Psal. 106. 8. *his power to be known, and that the* Israelites *might*
Ex. 10. 2. *know that he was God.* This, he says, is not as if the Scripture meant, that Miracles are in themselves convincing Arguments, but onely that the *Holy Spirit* makes use of them as Arguments *ad hominem*, that is (for want of better Evidences) he is fain to take all the advantage he can of their pre-conceived Opinions, however irrational and absurd, and makes these his Topicks, as most effectual to perswade or convince them, and in this sense he interprets what St. *Paul* says, that *to the Jews he became as a Jew, to the Greeks as a Greek*, that is, argued with both

not

not from any true and rational Principles, but by making the best use he could of their prejudices and prepossessions to gain them to his side.

2. That it is not consistent with true Philosophy, that God in the Order and Course of his Providence should be conceived to take greater care of one person or Nation than another; *viz.* he is not only bound to provide for all whatsoever means are necessary for their happiness, but also obliged not to give any one Man over and above any degree of Grace which he does not equally impart to all the World. To answer these two Positions fully, we should be obliged to examine *Spinoza*'s second and third Chapter of his *Tractatus Theologico-Polit.* whereto he refers us for the demonstration of both. Tr. p. 16.

I pass on therefore to the third thing he proposes to make out: *viz. That the Scripture by the Decrees and Commands, and consequently the Providence of God understands nothing else but the fixt and immutable Order of Nature.* This he attempts to prove two ways, 1. By Instance. 2. Because the Scripture relates several *Circumstances* in the production of those Effects that are commonly held to be supernatural. His Instances are some that I mentioned above in my Answer to the *Premonition*, viz. God telling *Samuel*, *He would send him a Man out of the land of* Benjamin, which was onely *Sauls* coming to him to enquire about the Asses. God being said *to turn the hearts of the* Egyptians, *so that they hated the* Israelites, who yet it appears, were moved to hate them upon Politique Accounts. Gods saying, *He would set his Bow in the Sky*, and yet the Rainbow, an undoubted Effect of Nature. So also the melting *Proposition* 3. Tr. p. 16. *Arg.* 1. Tr. p. 17. 1 Sam. 9. 15, 16. Psal. 105. 24. Ex. 1. Gen. 9. 13. Tr. p. 18.

Pſal. 148. 18. and 104. 4. melting of the Snow called Gods Word, and the Wind and Fire his Miniſters.

I grant that the Scripture in theſe Inſtances, by Gods Decrees or Commands means no more than the Laws of Nature: but his Argument ought to conclude univerſally, for which a few inſtances in ſuch particulars wherein it holds, are not ſufficient. It is enough for me to name ſome things which the Scripture relates as the Decrees and Purpoſes of God, which yet could never take effect by the mere Courſe of Nature. As for Inſtance, *That a Virgin ſhould conceive and bear a Child*, That three Men ſhould be caſt into *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Furnace, and the ſame Fire kill thoſe perſons that came ſo near to the Mouth of the Furnace as to throw them in, and yet not ſo much as ſinge a hair of their heads, though thrown into the midſt of it. That the Sun ſhould ſtand ſtill at the word of a Man; Fire come down from Heaven at the command of another; the Sea be ſtilled, the Dead raiſed, the Devils caſt out, at the Word, Touch, and Shadow of others. All theſe Effects the Scripture ſets down as wrought by the Decree and Order of Almighty God, but not, I preſume, by the Courſe of Nature. In a word, the Anſwer has been given before: That the Scripture aſcribes all Effects to God, natural or above Nature and as, from it's *aſcribing the Effects of Nature to God, without mentioning how he produces them*, we cannot juſtly conclude that it *records them for miraculous*; ſo on the other hand, from its ſpeaking of ſupernatural Effects in the ſame manner, we have as little reaſon to infer, that it *means nothing by them but the Order of Nature*.

Iſ. 7. 14. Dan. 3. Joſh. 10.

His

His second Reason is, because the Scripture relates several *Circumstances* in the production of Miracles; which Circumstances, he says do shew that these Miracles required Natural Causes. So the Sprinkling of Ashes required to produce the Plague of Scabs, an East Wind to bring the Locusts, and a West Wind to drive them away; an East Wind likewise to drive back the Red Sea. *Elijah*'s laying his Body upon the Body of the *Shunamites* Child, in order to raise it to life again.

Ag. 2. Tr. p. 19.

Ex. 9, 8. 10. 14. 14. 21

2 Kings 4. 34.

If he argue to the purpose, he must grant that these Circumstances, which he makes requisite in the Order of Nature to produce these Effects, were also proper and sufficient in the Order of Nature to produce them either wholely or in part.

And indeed the Wind may seem a very proper Instrument to bring and carry away the Locusts, and to drive back the Sea: but the raising of the Wind, and determination of it is ascribed to another Circumstance not very proper to be the efficient Cause of it, *viz.* the stretching out of *Moses*'s *Hand* and his *Rod*. And this commonly was the first Circumstance in every Miracle which *Moses* wrought, and therefore though it were not sufficient to produce those Effects immediately and by it self, yet it must be supposed proper to set all the other subordinate Causes on Motion. For their *requiring natural Causes, because related with some Circumstances concurring to their production*, must imply that these Circumstances were the Natural Causes requisite. And if so, then *Moses*'s Rod had many great, many occult, yet Natural Qualities, very hard indeed to explain or conceive, and very admirable, though not miraculous;

as of *raiſing and laying Winds and Storms of Thunder and Hail, turning the Water into Blood, bringing Frogs out of the River, producing Lice out of the Duſt, Water out of the Rock*, &c.

To be ſhort, the Circumſtances commonly mentioned as concurrent to the production of Miracles, are ſo far from proving that they had Natural Cauſes, that they prove the contrary. For if they had any Natural Cauſes, theſe Circumſtances muſt be all or part of them: but they are ſuch as are in no wiſe qualified to produce the Effects aſcribed to them in the Order of Nature, therefore muſt be qualified for it by a Supernatural Power, which can produce *quidlibet ex quolibet*, and make any thing inſtrumental to what Purpoſes and Effects it pleaſes.

For Inſtance, the *Clay* and the *Spittle* were the immediate Inſtruments applied by our *Saviour* to the Eyes of the Blind, and Tongue of the Dumb-man, The mention whereof in the account of theſe Miracles, if it prove that they required Natural Cauſes, then theſe were the Cauſes requiſite, theſe they had, and theſe immediately produced the Effects. This they could not by the force of Nature, therefore by Miracle; and ſo his Argument deſtroys it ſelf.

But farther, what if many are produced without any Circumſtances at all, but purely at the Word and Will of the perſon that works them? This he ſays we cannot be aſſured of from the *Scripture*, becauſe there may have been ſome though not mentioned there (he refers to *Exod.* 14. 27. compared with *Ex.* 15. 10.) But what if the Scripture does not only not make mention of any, but in a manner declares there were none? So in our Saviours ſtilling the Storm,

Storm, the very Reflection that his Diſciples make upon that Miracle, proves that it was wrought by his bare Word, and not by the Application of any Means, much leſs, Natural. Before he draws his Concluſion from theſe Arguments, he anſwers an Objection from Scripture, *viz.* *That Famins are ſaid to be cauſed by the ſins of Men*, and the like: and Rain and Plenty reſtored by their Prayers, &c. His Anſwer is, that the Scripture does here ſpeak *ad hominem*, and with the ſame Propriety as when it ſays that God is *angry*, *ſorrowful*, *repents*, or the like; and that it is not true that any of theſe are the Cauſes of the Effects aſcribed to them. Here 1. Methinks he is wary in his Anſwer. He might have granted that Famine is ſent for the ſins of Men, and Rain and fruitful Seaſons for a return to their Prayers and Repentance, and yet have denied that either of theſe is wrought by Miracle. For Nature is ordered and directed by the Wiſdom and Providence of Almighty God, as well as preſerved and upheld by his Power; and therefore his Wiſdom may ſo direct it, as often even by the Courſe of Nature to execute his divine purpoſes whether of Judgment or Mercy. He ſees our Actions and hears our Prayers from all eternity, and therefore may, as he has the whole Order of Nature before his eyes, direct and determine the certain and neceſſary Events of it to their proper Seaſons, and make them Inſtrumental to the accompliſhing of his purpoſes, whether of ſhewing favour or executing wrath upon the Sons of Men. Thus therefore he need not be ſo ſtrict as to deny any poſſibility of God's puniſhing us for our ſins in the Order of Nature, for fear leſt it

Luk 8. v. 25.

Tr. p. 2.

ſhould

ſhould betray him unawares to the conceſſion of a Miracle. Natural Cauſes indeed our Sins or Prayers are not of theſe Effects, nor yet Supernatural neither, but moral only and meritorious, as God upon view of either determines to puniſh or reward us. But ſuppoſe it were not ſo, 2. He gives but a very mean Solution of the difficulty *that the Scripture ſpeaks improperly here, and in condeſcenſion to the Capacities and Opinions of the Vulgar, as it does when it ſays that God is angry, ſorrowful or repents.* We grant the Scripture may be conceived to be obliged to ſpeak in this manner, concerning the incomprehenſible Nature of God, and ſuch of his Perfections the modes whereof it is not neceſſary we ſhould have explained to us, how they are and act in him: but yet it is not neceſſary that it ſhould ſpeak of every thing in the ſame manner, or that every thing that it ſays ſhould be ſhuffled off by this or the like ſuggeſtion. Nothing is more natural and eaſie to be conceived, than that God does puniſh or reward our good or bad Actions, and that in this life, and that his Juſtice and Wiſdom will oblige him to do it as he takes upon him the Government of the World: though it be very hard for the Vulgar to conceive how he does it without anger or diſpleaſure and the contrary affections. Therefore the Scripture may be conceived to ſpeak of the one in condeſcention to our Capacities, though yet no reaſon why it ſhould be preſumed to ſpeak of the other in like manner.

Propoſition 4. Tr. p. 21.

I proceed to his fourth and laſt undertaking, *viz. To treat of the manner of interpreting the Scripture Miracles, and what things are chiefly to be obſerved in the Relations about them.* Or (as the Tran-

Tranſlator) *to ſhew that moſt Men have erred in their way of interpreting the Miracles recorded in the Holy Scripture.* To ſet us right he directs us in the reading of the Scripture-narrations about Miracles, to enquire into two things, 1. *The particular Opinions and Prejudices of the Relator*: 2. The *Idioms, Phraſes and Tropes, of the Hebrew Tongue.* The firſt, becauſe generally all Hiſtorians relate the events they ſpeak of ſuitable to their own Conjectures, Opinions, and Prejudices. The other, becauſe otherwiſe we may, from the Scripture-Style, conceive ſome things to be related for Miracles which really are not. For the firſt he inſtances in *Joſhua* 10. v. 12, 13. where the Account of the extraordinary length of that Day is given according to the common opinion of the Sun's and not the Earth's motion. For the Second, in ſome, allegorical places out of the Prophets. *Zachariah* 14. v. 7. *Iſa.* 13. v. 10. 48. v. ult. By theſe two inſinuations he would elude the force of all the clear and plain narrations about miracles in Scripture. To the firſt, and the inſtance he brings for it, I anſwer, the truth of the Miracle which *Joſhua* relates is not at all prejudiced though it were true that the Earth moves, and not the Sun; for the courſe of Nature was ſtopped, whether in the motion of the Sun or the Earth, and therein conſiſts the truth of the Miracle: As to the relation of it, it was not neceſſary either that *Joſhua* ſhould himſelf be ſo great a Philoſopher or ſo far inſtructed by an extraordinary Revelation, as to put up his requeſt to God that the Earth ſhould ſtand ſtill and not the Sun; or that the Account of it which he gives ſhould be otherwiſe than according to the appearance of ſenſe, and the

apprehenſions of the Vulgar grounded thereupon.

To the ſecond, the truth of the Scripture-Miracles depends not upon any allegorical expreſſions in the Prophets, but upon the naked Relations of matters of Fact in the Hiſtorical Writers; ſo that though in the former we are to proceed with ſome Caution, and not to take every thing for Miraculous, which is ſpoken of in an high ſtrain of expreſſion: yet in the latter we find no ſuch danger of being impoſed upon by the Tropes and Figures of the Hebrew Tongue, all things being delivered in the Hiſtorical part of Scripture with the greateſt plainneſs and ſimplicity.

I have run through the main of *Spinoza's* Chapter, which conſiſts in the proof of his four Propoſitions at
Tr. p. 26. firſt laid down. What is behind, is, 1. An account of his different Method in this Chapter from that which he takes in his firſt and ſecond Chapters about *Prophecy* and *Prophets*: but this is proper to his *Tractatus Theologico Polit.* 2. He attempts to prove from
Tr. p. 27. Scripture the Immutability of the Order of Nature, repeating alſo ſome of his former Arguments for it; 3. He cloſes all with a paſſage out of *Joſephus*, agreeable to his Opinion His places of Scripture which he alledges, are, *Pſal.* 148. v. 6. *He hath eſtabliſhed them for ever: he hath made a decree*, which ſhall not paſs; *Eccl.* 1. v. 9. *That there is no new thing under the Sun*, and other places parallel to them. To the firſt, the Order of Nature may be ſaid to be eſtabliſhed for ever, and yet that Term imply no uninterrupted or eternal duration of it: ſee *Exod.* 21. 6. 1 *Sam.*

1 *Sam.* 1. 22. *Deut.* 29. 29. *Levit.* 23. 14, &c. To the ſecond, it is poſſible, notwithſtanding that place, that there may ſomething new happen even according to the Order of Nature, for *Solomon* obſerves there no more than this, that ordinarily in Nature there is a conſtant viciſſitude, a coming and returning of the ſeveral Species of Things: for all which, it is poſſible within the Period of Six thouſand years that Nature may produce ſomething new and not ſeen or heard of before: and if by Nature ſomething thus new may be produced, there is no Reaſon from this place but the like may be done by Miracle too.

To *Joſephus*'s Authority it is enough to oppoſe the learned Mr. *Gregory*'s remark of him in his *Opera Poſthuma*, p. 33. That he makes it his buſineſs to leſſen and detract from the greatneſs of the Miracle which he relates out of the Scripture, only to gain a more eaſie approbation of his *Hiſtory* among the *Heathen*: and this Mr. *Gregory* makes out by ſeveral inſtances, one whereof is the paſſage here quoted by *Spinoza*.

To *Spinoza*'s Quotation out of *Joſephus*, the *Tranſlator* adds one or two more out of *Valeſius*, St. *Auſtin*, Mr. *Burnett*, and Dr. *Sprat*. Mr. *Burnett*, I have ſhewed above, in the very next Words almoſt to thoſe which here he quotes out of him, aſſerts poſſitively that there are Miracles. I need not tire my ſelf to examine whether the reſt are as directly againſt him, as I make no queſtion they are.

Upon the whole then I have made it appear, that the whole *Treatiſe* is only a *Collection* out of other Authors. That all of them, except *Spinoza*, are againſt

gainſt the opinion for which they are produced. And whether I have given a full Anſwer to his Arguments, I leave to the candid and impartial Reader to determine.

FINIS.

THE

CASE

OF THE

Schedule Stated.

Wherein an ACCOUNT is given

OF THE

RISE and *DESIGN*

OF THAT

Inſtrument,

And of the *Influence* it hath on the *Adjournments* of the *Lower Houſe of CONVOCATION*;

And all the *Authorities*, urg'd in behalf of the *Archbiſhop's Sole Power* to *Prorogue* the *Whole Convocation*, are occaſionally Examined.

By a MEMBER of the Lower Houſe of CONVOCATION.

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